

CAN WE AFFORD TO DRINK ?



DR. B.D. SHARMA



We, as a nation, cannot afford to drink is the simple conclusion presented in simple terms in this book. The issue is discussed in terms of simple social and economic implications for the common man. The moral aspect, notwithstanding its importance, is not invoked for the sake of clarity.

Implications of drinking are directly related to the level of income. Lower (higher) the income, higher (lower) is the expenditure on drinking as proportion of family income. It is insignificant for those who wallow in wealth. They can afford inebriation unlimited without affecting the necessities and even comforts of all sorts. It serves as lubricant for meteoric ascent. It has become a symbol of status and insignia of modernity.

The situation is dismal at the other end. The axe falls on elements which determine the quality of life viz, education, housing and clothing in that order. Investment on education is reduced to zero in the last deciles. Productivity nose-dives with rising incidence of drinking. The viscous spiral of poverty serves as a thick curtain for covering intrinsic inequity of the System. It creates an illusion of *apni-karni*, absolves the State of its responsibility and destroys the protest-potential of the people.

State intervention through prohibition is foredoomed to fail. Moral exhortations have proved to be far too inadequate. The community has been purposely kept out of the scene by the rulers. The arena has remained open for free play of mafia, market and minions. In the meantime, a dualistic structure has emerged with a thin crust of the super-affluent 'anti-nation' at the top. The real nation is groaning under its weight.

The revolt of the most oppressed, the women, for whom the evil of drinking is the proximate manifestation of all adverse forces, has been insidiously neutralised by the rulers in the first round through the ploy of prohibition. Even radicals have missed its revolutionary message. A silent revolt, however, has started in the tribal areas with assertion of the natural right of self-governance with social control on drinking as the first item on agenda. The right has been conceded by the State with the acknowledgement of the competence of the community in the form of Gram Sabha to manage all its affairs including intoxicants and enshrining the same in the Constitution.

The community's control over this social issue in the tribal areas is being accepted as a model for emulation in other areas. It can be the first major step in the structural transformation of the centralised polity into participative democracy.



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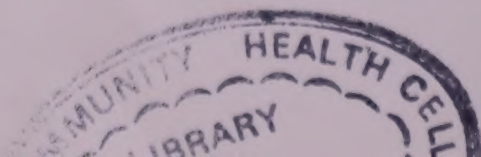
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PREFACE

I am a prohibitionist, but with a difference. I do agree that there is a moral side associated with the use of intoxicants. But that is an aspect which should be the concern of the community, of social and, may be, of religious leaders. There is no case for a direction from the State in that regard. But there is another aspect of use of intoxicants, which is economic. This aspect is not class-neutral like the moral side. While the rich can afford to enjoy the 'little vices' like drinking, the deprived can hardly afford that luxury. In fact, this 'luxury' may be one of the main instruments of expropriation in their case. Every one knows about this. But the vested interests ensure that there is no discussion about it or, what is worse, the issue is lost in a big confusion which can be easily created in the universe of words, opinions and ideas.

What is true for individuals is equally true for nations, nay with greater force. The individual has a '*free will*', notwithstanding its susceptibility for being influenced insidiously. In the case of a nation, on the other hand, there is no such thing as free will? What may come to be portrayed as the will of a nation formally, may be nothing but the *diktat* of the vested interests contrived in an appropriate form. The nation itself in practical terms is after all a formal construct. Therefore, the relevant issue at the national level cannot just be moral; it is economic, pure and simple. It can be presented in formal terms amenable to be assayed formally in quantifiable terms.

I, therefore, ventured to pose a question in the context of our socio-economic situation '*Can we, as a nation, afford to drink?*' I presented my analysis in the form of a small book, which was also my first book, '*Prohibition and Economic Development, or Can We Afford to Drink?*' It was published in 1969 by the All India Prohibition Council. It evoked some discussion

by way of a few reviews in some papers. Some of them were satirical. But that was all. Our elite, as could be predicted, evinced no interest. The perturbations created in small circles elsewhere also died out in almost no time.

But the economics of intoxicants became increasingly crucial for the ordinary people as we marched ahead under the banner: '*Development First, At Any Cost*'. The nation has been obliged to pay heavily in the form of '*wages of sin*' of the State which came to identify itself with the '*band of looters*', encouraged, supported and at times promoted by the ruling elite. This elite, in course of time, unabashedly came in the open as partner in that nefarious game. These forces, however, have been challenged from two sides, namely, the tribal people and the women. The reason is simple. They are the worst sufferers of the wrong policies of the State in this matter. The style of the two challenges is, however, different. The women's challenge was no doubt momentous. But it has been successfully countered by the rulers for the time being by tactical retreat. While accepting their demand for prohibition and also its formal enforcement, the rulers built in subterfuges surreptitiously to ensure that it not only fails but serves as a reminder to the crusaders not to indulge in such impossible pursuits. The *mafia* in the concerned States has tried to take advantage of this situation to consolidate its position. This, however, cannot be the end of the story. It is bound to be challenged, as the real assertion by the victims begins again after their regrouping.

The challenge in the tribal areas has taken a new turn after the people realised the inherent weakness of the measures of the State, however well-meaning and laudable, in a matter like use of intoxicants, which is essentially social and concerns the community. The people insisted as a part of their assertion for self governance, popularly known as '*Hamare Gaon Mein Hamara Raj*', that no action in this regard could be taken by the government without taking the community in confidence. Moreover it is also imperative to keep the role of the community as central and that of the State as supportive, that too strictly at the behest of the community. Their assertion had to be accepted in the overall situation of these area.

It is unfortunate that a state of confrontation between the people and the State in the tribal areas had arisen ironically after independence. It has been accentuating ever since. The reason was simple. A set of formal exotic institutions had been superimposed over these areas with no place and role whatsoever for the community at the village level which had been and continues to manage all its affairs effectively in accordance with its customs and tradition. All affairs concerning intoxicants including enforcement of prohibition under the new law which came into force on December 24, 1996, are under the purview of the Gram Sabha. The role of higher level institutions including the State is supportive and complementary as may be considered necessary in each case.

With this change in the Scheduled Areas, a natural question is being raised in other areas as well, viz., *'if it can be so in the Scheduled Areas why not in other areas where the level of consciousness particularly amongst women is much higher?'* Madhya Pradesh happens to be in the lead with regard to the legal frame for regulation of intoxicants by the community in the Scheduled Areas. That similar provision should be made for other areas is also gaining support after the Gram Sabhas in the general areas have been given full command in matters concerning development. It is, therefore, time that basic issues concerning drinking are discussed not on moral and ethical grounds alone, which are no doubt important, but in full glare of the reality of their economic consequences and the community's natural right for self-governance. That the beginning should be made with the community deciding for itself that there will be no *'mad ka raj'* in the village will be the most apposite inauguration of Gaon Ganrajya.

It is in this frame of reference that. I am placing herewith before the people a simple question *'Can We Afford to Drink?'* The answer is a clear 'No'. This is supported by the common man of this country on the basis of his experienced reality. The Revolt of the women, which is a revolt not merely against drinking but against the System, but ironically has not been recognised as a revolt even by the radicals, forcefully affirms that answer in unequivocal terms. The tribal people have already recorded a major victory which is a source of inspiration and strength for all others in the country.

Nevertheless our ruling elite refuses to see the reality as it informs the ordinary people, I am presenting the analysis in a form familiar to them so that they may have the opportunity of refuting our propositions, if they so desire. The victims are not solicitous of their opinion for the objective is clear and the measures for achieving the same are simple. Let the people decide, manage and direct all affairs relating to intoxicants. So far as the State is concerned it must withdraw from this vital area of social concern and stand by the people, should they feel the need, to curb the *mafia*, which is basically a creation of its minions.

B.D. Sharma

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(Being the Essay on 'Prohibition and Economic Development, Or Can We Afford to Drink?' published by All India Prohibition Council, New Delhi, April 1969)

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PART-I

I

THE WILY GAME

'Hide and Seek' is the name of the game which has gone on now for half-a-century after independence. Ironically, it is about a vital matter concerning the life of the people about which-

- * there was near unanimity during the freedom struggle,
- * even those, who could not put reins on their own craving, earnestly wished their wards not to fall its prey,
- * the person who led that Great Struggle and has been anointed as *the Father of the Nation* was categorical, to the limit of being fanatical : If I were to become dictator for a single day that will be my first decision; that is,

the one-word diktat

PROHIBITION

And the people were misled on this vital issue. They are misled even today by that simple statement of that wise man about what he personally felt about that issue, about what the ordinary man felt about the same.

Total identification with the ordinary people and their aspirations was the unique quality and source of limitless strength of Gandhiji. Then, could he ever dream of becoming a 'Dictator'? Yet, he was a *dictator* unto himself, as he would wish every citizen to be in a real democracy of his dreams comprising *Man the Supreme*, imbued with the ideal of '*All Powers to the People*', their representatives abiding strictly by the brief and the roles assigned to them by the People, and nothing beyond!

Yet, the people first believed that after independence, when WE THE PEOPLE assume control over the State after establishing the same, what was so obvious would be done in the normal course. Accordingly, the goal was set, the Principle was

enunciated and Prohibition was enshrined in the Constitution as a Directive Principle of State Policy. But that was not to be. *The diktat of the dictator* lost its punch as those who should have led the nation as per *His Diktat* surrendered to the myths of the Imperial Throne and Royal Splendour.

The very perceptions about life and the sustaining values changed in the mean time. Whatever was done, was done by way of grudging concessions to the '*die-hards*' amongst the warriors of freedom. But they themselves slowly lost their bearings in the stately confusion of institutions and authorities, their roles and responsibilities and the rituals in the name of socialism and democracy.

Nevertheless the people waited patiently for their representatives to assume the role of a dictator in this matter. After all what is a 'whip' in the Parliament of a Democratic Country? Sometimes there were upsurges as well, as the people, particularly women lost their patience. Examples of Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and Haryana are the latest in this series. Even when an odd dictator, be it the old Morarji or the new Bansi, came on the stage and had his say, a sort of law was enacted to bring about prohibition. But that fiat remained a mere law on paper with all its weaknesses. It was marred by scepticism galore and insincerity writ large on the part of those charged with the grave responsibility of its implementation. The ruling elite, including the politicians, would swear by it and affirm their faith over a fullsome peg, with hic-ups unending.

The sabotage by the executive is unpardonable. It did not reconcile itself to the new democratic climate. It did not live up to the simple tradition of even a neutral civil service, let alone an instrument of change, committed to effective implementation with sincerity, forgetting its own preferences after a political decision was taken. It is the saddest part of the administrative history of our country that it is the personal, the group and the class interests that have plagued the System and have become the most important determinants of their action. The cause of the common man has been the worst casualty. Even the most serious issues concerning equity or even welfare of the people are handled, at best, just for the sake of form. '*Sabotage!*' is

the silent Cry of Rulers, which begins to reverbrate the entire System, the moment any of the vested interests on the other side are even obliquely affected even in pursuance of the Constitutional objectives.

The way the issue of prohibition has been handled is the worst example of this nefarious design. In this case, it is not even the personal interest of these groups which has come in the way. It is hedonistic impulses and perverted self-righteousness, with arrogance of a ruler who wallows in the little world of his own, refusing even to acknowledge the reality beyond, which have been the root cause of the debacle in this vital matter concerning use and management of intoxicants. This has been so even though there is near consensus amongst the people, even after the downhill slide of half-a-century that, as a nation, we cannot afford to drink.

Even as a source of revenue, a sensitive civil servant of the British Raj was compelled to describe '*abkaree*' as 'wages of sin' as early as 1860. The drunkenness amongst the natives had increased to a frightful extent just in twenty years after the, indtoruction of that policy. 'The present iniquitous system, which, 'according to him, 'first produced and now supports a large class whose sole interest it is to seduce their fellows into drunkenness and its necessary concomitants, debauchery and crime ... Moreover, while we debauch our subjects we do not even pecuniarily derive any profit from their ruin. Of this revenue, the *wages of sin*,... for every rupee additional that the *Abkaree* yields, two atleast are lost to the public by crime, and spent by the Government in suppressing it'. It is a sad commentry on the moral fibre of the 'successors' that no such ferverant concern came to the fore even as they were supposed to work for tranforming that iniquitous system into an egalitarian socialist democratic republic. The issue has been buried deep in the earth and securely covered by conspiracy of silence.

The civilian was none other than Mr. Allen Octavian Hume, who later resigned from the coveted I.C.S. His dissent about *abkaree* policy was one of the three main grounds for that decision.

It is surprising that even the Gandhians of all persuasions- die-hards, liberals and radicals- did not perceive the fallacy of

the simple proposition of a state law on prohibition. It is true that they have been emphasising that the real solution does not lie in the law but in the reform of man himself. But that begs the question and does not take into account the fallacy of *Individual versus the State*. The die-hards and even some well-meaning persons on the other extreme, in their turn, have beleaguered the prohibitionist with a tongue-in-cheek argument, 'Why should the State be asked to intervene or even delve in this purely personal matter? If everyone were to decide for himself to abstain from drinking, prohibition would be automatic.' That is fine. But these gentlemen conveniently ignore the ugly reality of the insidious and even open and blatant collusion between the vested interests and the keepers of law on the one side and the negation of the community on the other side. In fact, community has been reduced to the status of a hapless witness to the misdeeds of a few in the name of freedom of individual.

The fact that the formal state-apparatus cannot, and is not designed to intervene in social matters, is ignored on purpose. The rulers, even the elected representatives, are not prepared to shed the authority which they wield in the System which continues to be colonial not only in its frame but, what is worse, with a perverted spirit. Earlier, it was an alien power which was at the helm of affairs. Therefore, it could be targeted easily as the source of evil. Now, it is the people's own representatives and persons under their command who are at the helm of affairs. As such '*They Can Do No Wrong*' having acquired that license to rule and manage the way they like, after the ritual of vote. So we have the ridiculous spectacle of people being advised to mend their own ways even as the collusion at the top continues and evil forces are let loose to defy.

Proposition with a Difference for the Tribal People

It was in 1974 that I was able to convince both the All India Prohibition Council and the Union Government that the situation in tribal areas was quite different compared to other areas. It was unfortunate that their social system was not even taken note of, in which use of traditional brews like *landa*, *salfi*, was a part of social life. Amongst Gonds, the brew of *mahua*

flower is a must at every occasion, from birth to death. Accordingly, a tribal is always on the wrong side of law, be it prohibition or non-prohibition. In the former case, he is not supposed to use any intoxicant, traditional or otherwise. In the latter case, he is supposed to use intoxicants approved by government, which have to be purchased from authorised outlets. He is not supposed to brew his own. But 'how could he depend on government-approved brew atleast for religious purposes?' no one cared to answer! So the tribal, by definition, is a violator of law, even though he may be acting strictly in accordance with the hoary tradition spanning over countless generations.

The most promising aspect of the tribal scene is that the community is still in a position to respond to the changing situation. A number of spontaneous movements have been occurring within the community, sometimes with stimulus from outside, to wean away the people from drinking with commendable success in some cases. But this social sanction remains valid only so long as a person voluntarily abides by it and/or the concerned officials in the System are sympathetic to the cause. An odd member of the community, in collusion with policeman, or even taking advantage of the incongruous legal frame, may directly appeal to any court of law and question the authority of the community for social sanction and portray the same as personal harrasment and transgression of his rights as a citizen. Once a dent is made even in a single case, the whole edifice of social sanction, built over generations, may give way. Persons with deep concern may remain helpless witnesses in anguish to the ruination of their social and economic life, as the vested interests of contractors or bootleggers, as the case may be, rule supreme.

A new frame was prepared to enable the tribal people to come out of this net, in which they had been trapped partly as a conscious policy of the colonial rulers to subjugate the wily tribes of rugged wilderness, and partly because of lack of even elementary understanding about the tribal people amongst the ruling elite after independence. The latter, at best, indulged in meaningless rhetoric of '*museum-piece versus main stream*' theories which have no relationship with the real issues. The new

excise policy frame basically comprised three elements. *Firstly*, commercial vending of liquor was to be totally stopped so that the vested interest of liquor contractors could be eliminated. *Secondly*, the traditional preparation of intoxicants for personal use was to be allowed with a clear stipulation that it could not be sold. *Thirdly*, the responsibility for enforcement of the new policy was to vest with the community.

The guidelines were duely accepted by all state governments. Vending of liquor was stopped. The tribal people were allowed to prepare their traditional drinks. But so far as the third element of the policy concerning social control was concerned, ambivalence prevailed. **Silence is the most effective weapon of the executive in such cases.** The principle was not questioned by any State. Yet, no state government took the simple decision of implementing the same. It remained a policy on paper. The concerned departments continued to wield the authority with regard to implementation of law, with no role whatsoever for the community.

The results were predictable. *Firstly*, liquor shops did disappear from the tribal scene along with the contractors and their musclemen. The people heaved a great sigh of relief. *Secondly*, the preparation of traditional drinks, which was being done even earlier, but in violation of law and therefore under cover, now became legal. With this change, another source of unspeakable harassment of the tribal people by the contractor and the police, jointly and severally, was removed. There was considerable restraint on drinking itself for some time as people rejoiced in their liberation from a draconian law, which had the effect of branding every tribal a criminal and vulnerable to legal action at the sweet-will of the concerned officials and even the contractor. But the fear of that law, as well as of the intruders under its cover, had one salutary effect. No one could prepare the traditional brew even for personal and social purpose without the permission of this 'gang', which, of course, could be had for a consideration. Similarly, the sale of traditional brew was kept under stringent control by the contractor, as it was a serious competitor of *his* liquor. On both these counts, drinking was rather restrained.

The new law had the effect of removing this constraint. The official intervention in a situation, where it is difficult to distinguish between what is for personal consumption and what is for sale, cannot be very effective. It can, at best, be notional. The community had no formal role whatsoever to play in this vital matter. In this situation, there are no restraints whatsoever on preparation and even small scale sale of traditional intoxicants in the tribal areas. What is worse, even exotic drinks are finding their way under its cover into these areas. A new vested interest is taking root which is interested in promotion of drinking to the very brink, with no holds barred.

It may be recalled that this policy package was envisaged as the first step towards prohibition *via* removal of vested interests and assertion of social will as there is realisation amongst the people about its ill-effects. The full package, however, was not implemented. The end result, therefore, is just the other way round. The incidence of drinking in the tribal society has risen sharply. A new vested interest with all associated evils has emerged and has been getting entrenched. *Some people even feel that the earlier System, notwithstanding the harassment and the economic consequences, was better.* There was some restraint on drinking. Now with the incidence of drinking rising perpetually it is disastrous for health. Moreover, the small economic gains accruing to the people on many other counts may be nullified by uninhibited drinking. It is, therefore, bound to lead to their destitution at a much faster pace than earlier. **The package designed for the well-being of the tribal people *minus* social control has become dysfunctional and anti-tribal.**

Here is a well-meaning excise policy, which was accepted by all. Those who are against prohibition favoured it because there is no element of compulsion in this frame. Similarly, those, who are for prohibition, supported it because that could be the first-step towards prohibition. The vested interests against any scheme of prohibition would be rooted out in this process. Our logic was also very simple. There can be no case for prohibition if there is no social awareness and consensus amongst the people. 'How can one convey the idea of prohibition in a community where drinking is a norm?', I had argued while propos-

ing the package. The community can be expected to become aware about the issue, step by step, if the community itself were to be the decision-maker. The social activists can also have a decisive role in this respect as was really the case in many areas. It is unfortunate that the community, which has the real stake and vital role, had been kept out of picture for the simple reason that our ruling elite refuses to take note of its very existence. In fact, the community does not find a place at all in the formal legal frame, that is, the System. The System, therefore, by its very nature, cannot take cognizance of the community. And how can the System recognise the community comprising the people since the basic premise on which even the independent Indian State rests has remained unchanged ever since the Raj was founded '*Trust the System, Not the People*'.

The Wily Game

Here is the real dilemma is our national life. The really concerned, that is, the ordinary people are not to be trusted and the community is not even recognised. And those who comprise the System and, at best, are formally concerned have the exclusive privilege of vital roles being assigned and crucial duties to perform. The people's will is no doubt getting expressed in various forms. But it is largely outside the formal System. In the absence of a living frame, which can give it a concrete shape so that it may become a match to the adverse forces and counter the inertia of the System, that energy gets dissipated after even spectacular achievements like enforcement of total prohibition. *In the first phase after independence, the fervour concerning prohibition was more ideological with moral overtones following Gandhiji.* It had active acquiescence of the people, if not enthusiastic support. This was reflected in the Constitution. Prohibition was accepted as a Guiding Principle of State Policy. All States got ready for enforcing the same in stages. Some States like Bombay had it in one go. There was, however, insidious let down on implementation for reasons discussed earlier. It was claimed that liquor was flowing more freely under prohibition, which, in addition, was a health hazard for want of any regulation. The people looked askance as the blame was put at the door-steps of idealism and the idealists, unconcerned with the rustic reality of minor vices being integral part of human behaviour.

STATE AGAINST PEOPLE

Widening of the National Divide

In the mean time, the general situation in the country continued to deteriorate so far as the common man is concerned. As inequality came to be accepted as an essential condition of growth, at least in the early phase, particularly in the service of capital formation, it started acquiring demonic dimensions. Affluence got legitimacy as an engine of growth. In this milieu, not only drinking became fashionable in the upper strata, it came to acquire the status of an essential condition for success and became an insignia of modernity even for the rest. But the matter did not rest there. From mild to strong, from strong to drug-fiending are just normal stages in that unrestrained progression. Accordingly, drug addiction has become rampant. This laxity is taking a heavy toll in many other spheres of social life, including increasing fragility of marriage bonds, promiscuity and last, but not the least, the spectre of AIDS. There is quixotic search for solutions, no one caring, or daring to touch the real cause.

The situation on the other side in the dualistic system amongst the deprived also continues to deteriorate at a fast pace. While the man in distress is seeking refuge in drinking, the family is getting in deeper morass of economic catastrophe. *Women are the worst sufferers. While they are in no position to understand the larger processes at the national and international level leading to deprivation and destitution, drinking is the most proximate phenomenon and the visible direct cause for the misery of the self as also their children. This they can see, feel and experience.* This has found expression, of late, in women taking the lead in anti-liquor agitations. The message, or the call in this case, is so clear and near to every woman's heart in all non-elite groups that it took no time for it to spread

through out the concerned State, which happens to be the frame of reference for the ordinary people for the problems of their day-to-day life. Moreover, the State also happens to be an important frame of reference for the media, particularly the language press, which is closer to the people and also more responsive to and in tune with popular aspirations.

The first massive women's upsurge of this genere was in Tamilnadu. The government could not resist. It was forced to impose prohibition. The second upsurge, still more sharp and swift, was in Andhra Pradesh. The government had to bow before the rising woman-power and impose prohibition. The third spontaneous move, again largely from women, came in Haryana. The Party which promised prohibition came to power. Prohibition was imposed in this State as well.

These upsurges against liquor are qualitatively different from the early popular demands. They are responses to the new economic challenge. The people, particularly the women, are convinced that the State is on the wrong in its policy on liquor. Moreover, it has no moral right to remain a silent spectator to the economic and social disaster. It must act decisively. Earlier the stance was that the State was not doing some thing desirable. The pressure was moral.

Nevertheless, the end result in either case so far has been the same. The vested interests in the wake of early zeal and euphoria of success amongst the people at large lay low for some time. But as usual, the elite, particularly the ruling elite, is not really convinced about the state action which they are forced to take under what they derisively refer to as populist gimmickry. In fact, they are refusing to acknowledge even the vital difference between the two situations. The vested interests, on the other hand, reorganise themselves while the ruling elite remains unconcerned, or acquiescent. In fact, it may even collude with the former.

The State, in this frame, is rather too keen to acknowledge the failure of experiment at the slightest pretext. There is no serious and objective assessment of the real situation. The official reviews are more in the nature of specious affirmation of their faith in the failure in such misadventures than a probe into

the reasons therefor. And the people are told in the style of a sermon about futility of their fight against a human failing through state apparatus, which is also conveniently conceded as faulty because that suits the rulers. *The women, or the people, at the end of their journey, are in Square One, from where they shot off sometime back, as Crusadors but with a difference, crestfallen constantly reminded of the failings of their idealist Crusades in a murky world. 'Reform the Man', is the sane advice, 'but always remember, it is an ideal which one can never attain. Your Effort is Your Reward. Never Pine for the Result.'*

Stark Reality Begs No Idealism

It was to meet this challenge of the so called pragmatists to the so called idealists that I had presented the analysis of the stark reality, in the Essay reproduced in Part-II, which goes with drinking without any reference to the moral exhortations. 'To hell with idealism, I am concerned with the fate of the ordinary people', was my counter-challenge. The occasion was the Centenary year of Gandhi's birth. The All India Congress Committee, which had fought the freedom struggle and had by then ruled the country for more than two decades, was reminded of the Diktat of the Dictator about prohibition. The nation still was not ready for a '*let us forget about it*' stance. In fact, the ruling elite had not yet acquired the strangulating hold on the national scene which it is virtually enjoying now. There were still countless people on the other side whose perceptions and persuasions could not be ignored. The All India Congress Committee, therefore, was obliged to decide to work for realisation of the dream of the Father of Nation but as a phased programme of seven years in deference to the so-called pragmatic considerations. This laboured resolution was really a disgrace to the centenary celebrations which no one realised because no one was even aware about the deep emotional commitment of its founder.

And much dust was raised on either side of the fence, knowing full well that what had not been even seriously attempted for two long decades shall not be accomplished in seven years. It proved to be a ploy, ploy with a style of course! The reason is simple. So far as the elite was concerned prohibition was never on its agenda. It had disappeared from the agenda

of all political parties as well-right, left or centre. The rationale in each case depended on their respective situations and pursuits.

I made two basic points in my Analysis. Firstly, notwithstanding the swirling dust in the sublime sky of elites, there was consensus amongst the ordinary people, who should really matter in a democracy, on the question of drinking. That drinking is undersirable is universally accepted. Even a person who drinks concedes, when not under the influence of liquor, that drinking is not good. He will not like his son to drink. So far as the possibility his daughter taking to drinking is concerned, it cannot be even imagined. There was only one exception to this general rule. The urban-upper class was a dissenter and thought otherwise. This class, however, was minuscule and could not be taken seriously in any decision about this grave national issue, except with regard to its mischief-potential. *I, therefore, urged that advantage must be taken of the most opportune social situation without losing any time before it was too late.* The nation was passing through a phase of structural transformation, which was loosening the traditional social fabric. It may take a long time before a new social frame may emerge. The vested interests may take advantage of this situation of flux and destroy that climate in favour of prohibition. They may corrupt the youth and that great opportunity may be lost for ever.

The second point concerned the reason for this hurry. It was quite simple. In the current phase of our national life, dedicated to the building of an egalitarian society, not only the basic needs of all citizens had to be fully met, but conditions had to be created for realisation of full potential of the personality of every woman and man, irrespective of the accident of her/his birth and status in life. Education, health and living conditions, besides the use of leisure time, behoving a cultured people, easily come at the top of the agenda. *And I demonstrated conclusively on the basis of firm data that it was with regard to these vital issues that the effect of drinking amongst the ordinary people is catastrophic.*

The detailed analysis, reproduced at the end in full, shows that investment on education in those poor families where fa-

ther drinks is almost zero, whereas for the same income group amongst those who do not drink, it could be as high as ten per cent. The second largest dent was in respect of expenditure on housing, that is, the living conditions of a people. It goes to determine the status of health in a family. The matter does not rest there. It is wrong to presume that drinking provides an outlet, a sort of relaxation for a person after a day's hard toil. In fact, those who drink are prone to spend more on other diversions as well such as smoking, *pan* and entertainment. And even in respect to what the pure economist may lay highest emphasis on, that is, productivity, it also is a demonstrable casualty. The sum total of diversions of income on such non-essentials could be any where between 15 to 20 percent, or even more.

When there are exhortations all around to 'Invest in Man', to 'Build the Future Generations', when in macro-economic system investment on social services is abysmally low and highly skewed as between the haves and the have-nots, which leaves hardly anything for the common man, can this huge diversion of family income from education, health and housing be allowed to go unquestioned, nay, encouraged indirectly on spurious premises, since it does not affect the ruling elite? In fact, such diversion serves the purpose of the elite admirably well. It cuts out bulk of the people from the competitive frame from the very beginning. Those who can afford can see that their children are far ahead in any race for advancement from Day One, not because of their intrinsic merit and higher potential, but because of the investment which their parents can make in them. Apart from the question of social equity, this unconcern for the large majority of people is a treachery with the nation itself. *The great potential of man in this nation of a thousand million souls remains undeveloped and unutilised in a phase of history when, after about two centuries of the holocaust of the imperial regime which has bled the nation white, every iota of every citizen's energy needs to be harnessed for its advancement.*

The fate of the poor given to drinking stands sealed. But what was happening even where the so-called development had succeeded as in Punjab? The noted social scientist Late Prof. Shyama Charan Dube and myself, during our long association spanning over three decades, had agreed to disagree on the is-

sue of prohibition from the very beginning. But after he visited Punjab some time in late seventies, he told me that after what he saw in Punjab he was obliged to agree with me. In a country side where people took pride in taking big glasses full of milk and butter milk, the scene had totally changed. Every third shop was a liquor shop, open or clandestine. 'Is this the society which we had dreamt of, for which we have worked, green revolution notwithstanding?' remarked Prof. Dube with a sense of deep concern and compassion for the people he so much loved and adored. Punjab is no longer an exception. A new India comprising the urban-organised, the Inheritors of the Raj, has come of age in the image of that Punjab which Prof. Dube so passionately described, the disinherited multitude having been declared as disposable.

The State and Its Minions

In the formulation, which I proposed, a strong plea was made for state intervention to counter the adverse forces taking advantage of and in support of the good will, nay a very positive urge, *albeit* unarticulated, in favour of prohibition. I still hoped that the political executive, the representatives of the people, would see reason and respect the people's will. They will be able to bridle the irresponsible and irresponsive executive, which was not prepared to see beyond its shell and graciously respond on its own to the people's will in the new democratic clime.

That was not to be. What is worse the political executive, the so-called people's representatives, in the mean time, themselves learnt the tricks of the trade, trivialised all values and institutions set up and created under that great Covenant on Nov. 26, 1949. They themselves have become a vested interest as an integral part of the rapacious Inheritors. They have no concern for the people on the other side, whom they are supposed to represent, so long as they can be fooled about at the time of casting of votes, a ritual which continues, about which people have become somewhat conscious, but are unable so far to see through the games which the rulers are playing.

Moreover, the times have changed in the mean time in a more fundamental way. The ruling elite has surrendered to what are termed as the processes of globalisation and liberalisation.

It means that the goals set out and values enshrined in the Constitution are no longer valid. According to the new premises, we, as a nation, have to accept a place in the World Economic Order which may be assigned to us by the Neo-Imperialist Capitalist forces. The ruling elite itself has acquired a new frame for itself. It does not consider itself as a part of the Indian Nation-State. It is impelled by a vision of global citizenship for its members. The ordinary people also are sought to be captured and tamed and suitably trained. There is unprecedented cultural invasion particularly *via* the electronic media. The luxurious living of the rich is conditioning the people and is setting the cultural ethos of '*Clicking of Glasses*'. What they see on the screen has now become the dream world of even the disinherited destitutes. They are made to believe through a bevy of illusions and allusions that a day shall come when they may also be partaking in the same great feast. So they are happy with the crumbs, the shadows and even induced hallucinations with all descriptions of inebriants thrown in-between.

But this veneer is wearing off as the divide between the Inheritors and the Rest is deepening. The people are facing the harsh reality of their rejection by the System and their waning relevance in the new paradigm, notwithstanding the tall claims and still taller promises by the rulers. The tribal people are the worst affected in this game. They are up against the logic of *Eminent Domain*, which was forced on the 'Little Republics' by the Imperialist *looters* to legitimatise the plunder, and which ironically is unfolding in worse and more acute forms after independence. Every thing is currently being justified in the name of development. The rich resources in the tribal areas, a gracious gift of nature, have become the enemy of people in the face of a sort of rapacious '*Frontier Spirit*'. The national economy is being thrown open with no holds barred in a so-called free market in which every thing, including land and forest, can be sold and purchased under suitable covers no doubt. Displacement, disorganisation and destitution are the order of the day in this *mellee* so far as the tribal people are concerned.

The general scene in the larger rural segment of the national economy is also not very different from that in the tribal areas. The agricultural sector has been so manipulated that ag-

riculture as an economic activity is a losing proposition for the ordinary farmers. As such, land is being taken over from farmers-in-distress by people-with-money, be it the capitalists, the corporate sector or the multinationals as such. The ordinary farmer, in this milieu, has a feeling that his land he cannot save; it will slip off his hands, sooner than later. He is staring at the wide blue void above with stony eyes, not even in a position to wonder about the fate of his own, or his children.

The Trecherous Squeeze

And the market must squeeze the man unto the last drop. Universal education has been given a good bye. Instead, what we have is a programme of universal literacy being executed at a break neck speed. The design is simple and transparent. The *Wretched of the Earth*, instead of remaining glued to the wonder screen with all sorts of salacious acrobats, should be enabled to read the Messages Divine of Corporate Sponsors, national and multinational. The Organised Sector, which had imbibed the aura of *Inheritors of the Raj*, is also being broken up as it is outsized as per the new global norms. A select few amongst them are being drafted into the *World Class* of the global economy. The rest are being pushed out to what can be termed as a quasi-organised sector comprising a bevy of new functionaries called '*karmies*' - education, health, social security, even security proper, and what not. And duped are they by the dazzle on the other side with kindled hope of crossing the *Vaitarini*, if not today tomorrow, or the day after.

The worst facet of the present situation is that the democratic institutions, which should command and direct these processes, have degenerated into pressure groups ironically for the Invader. Every one who matters, the lowest *pancha* to the highest amongst them the *Prime Panch*, has been coopted, or outright purchased. In fact, as stated earlier, what we are witnessing is the unfolding of the Imperialist logic, which was allowed to continue in the System and adopted ostensibly for developmental goals. Equity has become a synonym of 'equitable' share is the *loot* and/or claims in the new *jagirs* sought to be established in its wake. The ground for that sham equity can be anything like class, caste, ethnicity, region, religion, gender, handicap, or any thing which one can think of.

So *loot* in the order of the day. And the greatest duty of our ruling elite, now in its new *avator* as *dalals* of the neo-Imperialist-Capitalist Global Axis, is to create conditions for further facilitating that *loot*. They must project the depredations as natural and legitimate, nay, a consequence of man's own deeds. This is what *Karma* and *Punarjanma* theories have done for ages. Coopt in the same style those who make unnecessary noises or are able to see through the game. They must convince the dissident, as also the people at large, that their suffering is not real but is like birth-pangs before a new life is born. The people must bear the same with fortitude and forbearance. And if worse comes to worse, the new angles can quote from scriptures even the Greatest Sages of Imperialist Order such as Malthus on Unrestrained Breeding and Darwin on Survival of the Fittest.

The Kiss of Death

And promotion of drinking, or creating favourable conditions for its promotion, is the most effective and deadly weapon in the hands of the ruling elite and all anti-people forces. It creates a tiny vicious circle of expropriation, indulgence and resignation to fate in every family. The state legitimises even this policy on specious considerations of revenue, of futility of fighting against human nature and of need for investment in social services in the aid of the ravaged themselves. It is conveniently forgotten that for every rupee of tax from liquor, the person spends five on what essentially is *the kiss of death*, that the big draft on his income is at the cost of his children's education as also his own health which tells heavily on his productivity, that the government would have earned much more even by way of tax revenue *via* higher sale of other commodities, that sales tax was introduced by the first Congress Government in Tamil Nadu in 1937 in pursuance of the same logic. The most pernicious part of this entire chain of events is the denial of education for a large segment of our people. It makes them susceptible to superstitions, old and new. They also become victims of a myth about their sorry state and poverty itself being a direct consequence of their lack of education. This premise has no basis in reality.

State-Managed Prohibition

The government on its side, and the idealists on theirs, have remained engaged in the game of 'Hide and Seek'. The latter did not care even to ponder over the real nature of their demand? After all, what does a movement for Prohibition in reality mean? What the Crusaders in effect do is to pray to the government, which they feel represents the omnipotent State '*Aye, Mai Bap Sarkar!*, make a law so that we, the obedient children of Yours do not drink. And if some of us do not behave, admonish us, catch our ears so that we behave!

When these children make too much noises, the *Maibaps* in *Sarkar* favour them with toys of law with a clear fore-warning about the fragility of those toys, the futility of the law. In fact, specious provisions are built into the same on purpose to ensure its collapse. The exclusive role and authority of the official machinery in implementation and also in overseeing the performance, which are converted into sorts of privilege, is the softest spot for the undoing of even the most earnest intentions to do the right thing, let alone the rituals concerning formal prohibition replete with insincerity and deceit. *Sarkari prohibition is a Trojan Horse of the right make in the nefarious game of people's ruination.*

Let us take the management of general excise laws. The Excise Law of M.P., for example, like similar laws of all other States recognises that drinking is injurious to health, that its sale shall not be promoted through advertisement, that its sale-points shall be strictly regulated and subject to stringent conditions under the watchful eyes of Advisory Committees in every town and in every district which shall include, *inter alia*, people's representatives. No retail shop, according to the Rules, shall be licensed for consumption of liquor on the premises if it is

- (i) in or at the entrance of a market place,
- (ii) in the neighbourhood of a mill, a factory or such like,
- (iii) near a place of worship, a bathing *ghat*, an educational institution, a hospital, a bus stand, a railway station, a highway, a labour colony or scheduled caste habitation.

A fine set of rules by any standards! But the State is omnipotent. The final authority not only about enforcement of the rules, but also to make exceptions, vests with the State and its officials. Moreover the community, which is the really concerned party, is no where in the picture. The so-called representatives in the Advisory Committees see no fault in the System, as after all ours is a democracy and, by definition, committed to the welfare of the people. A trade off on even some important points cannot be ruled out in the context of a limited frame of Excise Policy and the larger frame of overall governance of the State.

So what we find by way of the final operational point of this great law and rules made there under is the ritual of an innocuous print line at the bottom '*Liquor Is Harmful for Health*' in red of course. It is in sharp contrast with the tentatizing giant-size displays of Bottle and Wine with attendant glamour of all vintages, regal, *mod* and *ultramod*, with no holds barred. Highways are studded with inviting signals for a peg, unmindful of the soring hazard potential. The advice of Advisory Committees is subject to the final decision of the Exise Commissioner whose main concern, nay obsession, is revenue. And the State continues to make exception after exception, concerning location on the same ground, for otherwise there would be no place for even a single shop to stand on in the growing crowded metropolises.

The result is that *exception has become the rule and the rule a rare exception*, which itself is waning like the Grin of Cashire Cat. The ingenuity of exception-makers is pervasive. In the case of Madhya Pradesh, the Rule requires that an established shop shall not be allowed to remain on a site, should the surroundings change and any disability is acquired thereby. But lo and behold! all shops established before the Rule came into force were taken out of its ambit. That was not all. A new concept of '*traditional*' sites was mischievously manufactured. All shops established on or before a stipulated date, to be decided by the government, could be bestowed the honour of '*traditional*' and made immune from the mischief of the law. The last notification in this regard was issued on 23.8.1986 and all shops established before 1980 were deemed to be located at

'traditional sites' and consequently raised above the mundane law of the day. That blatant transgressions are to be taken in their stride and religiously ignored by the devout can be seen any high way littered with liquor shops, *desi* and *videshi* with tentatising sign boards even as the statute book strictly prohibits this with the provision of heavy penalty.

And the game of gracious governance goes on with feigned surrender to the weakness of man, allowing all perversions, all vested interests, including that of the self-styled protector, by the State to have their full play with the single end in view of revenue, profit and exclusive command over all resources which belong to the people.

THE COMMUNITY AND ITS ASSERTION

Exclusion of the Real Concerned

The people who are concerned, the community comprising their collectivity are no where in the scene in the schema of the State which we have discussed so far. It is the so called representatives of the people who are, at best, formally associated in what is taken as a ritual. The saddest part of the story is that they partake in that ritual, without caring even to allude to the people's wish, more as partners in the authority which continues to be of the colonial vintage, and much worse. Otherwise how can one explain such a flagrant violations of the letter and the spirit of a law which is of so deep a concern for the people and vitally affects not only their well-being but the very future of the society and the nation.

The colonial psyche is so deeply ingrained in the ruling elite, and also the educated, that the moment one speaks about even association of community which alone, by definition, is most vitally concerned, there is a volley of questions 'Can they do it?', *'Will they be able to understand it?'* *'Will the vested interests not be able to dominate the scene and do whatever they like?'* *'Will there be no blatant violations of law as the administration looks on helplessly?'* This is not the stance of only people in authority, even idealists succum to these purile propositions. Accordingly, even Gandhians with their zealous concern for the principle of prohibition remaining undiluted, unmindful of its unfortunate consequences, have not taken the bold stand of community being the final arbiter in a matter which concerns the community most vitally, which is within their understanding and which the State, by its very nature, should not indulge in.

Dynamics of Self-Management

The right to commit mistake is the most vital element in the process of learning and meaningful progress. Being obliged

to go along a prescribed line cannot be accepted as a meaningful process of learning. It is, at best, learning by rote. In fact, it is the worst form of authoritarian behaviour of a despot or ruinous indulgence of an obsessive mother towards her child. The result in either case is the same 'stupidity and idiocy'.

The overbearing State is obsessed with the ideal of perfect behaviour of the people as per legal prescriptions and its right as also the duty for ensuring strict compliance. Higher the level of decision-making, nearer it is expected to be to the ideal of a State which, in its purest form, is located at the pinnacle of a series of ever-narrowing circles of a cone at the imaginary centre of pure mathematics. Any scheme of sharing that omnipotence is an aberration which, at best, is tolerated on pragmatic considerations. Even a single lapse or mistake, may be genuine and *bonafide* at that, is a good enough reason for restoration of the 'ideal'. Of course, the System by its very nature has a right to commit mistakes. There are formal correctives, no doubt, but they may have nothing to do with the reality. The running down of such an authoritarian System is inevitable. It provides an ideal setting for the vested interests to consolidate and collude with powers that be. The game continues in the name of high principles, as the people remain perplexed, become cynical, lose faith and resign themselves to the idea of destiny, a dictator or an apostle for deliverance.

This resignation of people in the wake of continuing Colonial System has been the greatest tragedy of the post-independence scene in our country. The vital issue of the community assuming command over all its affairs has been totally missed, nay consciously undermined in a nation which is not tired of talking about the great tradition of *Gaon Ganrajya*. The collectivity of the people, comprising the face-to-face community, has not even been recognised eventhough that is what the Founding Fathers were referring to, when they deliberated and voted on Article 40 in the Constituent Assembly concerning Village *Panchayats*. *Panchayat* in common parlance even today means the congregation in the open of all people in a village and NOT, with all capitals, the elected few closeted in exclusive enclosures '*eight by eight*.'

The 'great' Community Development Movement has proved to be the greatest national blunder. The rulers ignored the ground reality and turned to the alien soil of the U.S.A. for its inspiration where community had already collapsed. That country has been desperately experimenting with make-shift designs to simulate *the community*. The result was that in our post independent national endeavour for reconstruction, we missed the essence of community which was still living and kicking, notwithstanding the century-long assault of alien rulers, and was in full command in many areas, particularly the tribal area. The aping elite could do no better with its vanity of omniscience, the ingrained contempt for the subject people and its style inherited from the erstwhile masters. The only person who would truly surrender to the people and accept their leadership as a democrat had been eliminated from the scene even before the parameters of governance had been settled.

The story of our country would have been different if the collectivity of people, comprising the face-to-face community had been vested with the authority, nay, the power which naturally vests in the community, which is *swayambhu*, which preceeds the Nation-State. These elements should have been simply recognised as a matter of faith in a nation dedicated to democracy and incorporated in the formal frame in an undiluted form unequivocally.

It is not that heaven would have come on the earth with the adoption of that simple *talisma*. What is vital is that thereby a new process would have set in. The common man would have started deliberating on matters concerning *his* day-to-day life, taken necessary decisions and proceed to act as per *his* own perceptions, priorities and premises. A process of real learning from experience would have begun. The people would have learnt more by their mistakes than successes and adopted necessary correctives because in that case they themselves would have been the actors and sufferers. They could not lay the blame at some other person's door-steps, nor they could have passed on the buck to fate. The real black sheep amongst them would have got exposed as no *alibi* could have been raised with reference to the unknown and unknowable regimes beyond. The

trouble makers would have been forced to mend their ways, as no person could have claimed superiority above the will of the community.

Even with all kudos to the collective wisdom and community action, some mistakes might have been committed, some dark horses might have carried the day on occasions. But that could never have been for good. No one can make every one a fool for all times. That is the way of a true democracy with direct participation of all people in every thing that matters and concerns them.

In this frame, what is vital is not the issue, nor the results, but the process, the process of coming together and realisation of the identity of that collectivity, the face-to-face community. Again, it is not important as to how that collectivity is structured. The internal relationship in a collectivity may be inequitous. It may be ridden with countless misbeliefs and galaxy of superstitions. But nothing can justify the non-recognition of community, nay, its very elimination and super-imposition of exotic command in the name of reform or modernisation. There can be no substitute of a living entity like the face-to-face community. Once community breaks, even family cannot sustain for long in a formal world presided over by the modern State. These formal structures, by their very nature, are incompatible with, nay, inimical to all non-formal relationships including those in a community and a family which are the quintessence of human society.

Any meaningful process of change has to be internal to the community and has to be internalised by the people. No structure or system is permanent. They change as new ideas inform the people. It may be remembered that it was the Church which condemned Galilio for the '*crime*' of telling the people that he had seen moons around Jupiter through a contraption of glasses which is now known as telescope. And now, three centuries later, it is the same Church which has a wing of radical Jesuits, who are waging war against the tyranny of Establishment. No one in the Church today subscribes to the condemnation of Galilio. That is a part of history. He has also been pardoned by the pontiff some three centuries after the condemnation. That

phase of history is over when a different world-view overtook the people. In no way, the present paradigm can be compromised on that count.

Community : The Only Hope

In the murky national scene today when everything seems to have been lost, when even sovereignty has been surrendered to World Trade Organisation and other international and multinational outfits, when the Constitution and all its institutions have been trivialised, *what we see by way of flashes of great events in the Establishment, be it the Election Commission or Judicial Activism, they cannot but be just the last flickers of flame before the darkness engulfs.* When there is ideological vacuum and self is at the centre of everything unabashedly, the only hope is *the people* expressing themselves through the System which *they* know, which *they* can handle and where *they* are on their own ground capable of deciding *their* strategies. This can happen only in the face-to-face community of a village or even a *mohalla* in a town. But alas, today even this arena is in disarray, as never before. Factionalism is rampant, self-interest is at its peak and politics of vote is destroying even the last vestiges of common concerns.

As stated earlier, this phenomenon is not a part of some historical process which is inevitable. This situation has been engineered by the ruling elite. It has been reinforced, of late, by the neo-Imperialist Capitalist Global Axis. The objective is simple : *'Destroy the Community, Capture the Resources, Throw away the Human garbage, Retain whatever may be of use to the Inheritors or their global allies'*. Cultural invasion, with vulgar cocktail-consumerism again, is not an autonomous phenomenon. It is part of a deep conspiracy for complete national subjugation. The sudden rise of Beauty Queens, penetration of five star tourism and the latest exotic fancy for the qualities of Indian women are calculated moves to draw the female of the species in the global flesh market. As liquor flows free, no frontier can remain intact; all are destined to waste out and to be wasted away. The question is merely that of time and timing, be it community or family, politics or economics.

New Responses to Challenge

Here is an issue of deep concern for everyone. There is intermitant fervour and ferment, particularly amongst ordinary women against the licentious extravagaza, who are its worst victims in the new dualistic paradigm with market reigning supreme. But that fervour gets trapped in the same old style through state-operated *sarkari* prohibition. The ordinary people, particularly women, are duped. The System is prepared to compromise for the time being with them in this new confrontation impelled by survival instinct. It knows that the *Minions of the System*, who will preside over Prohibition, will start corroding it from Day One. In any case, it shall not be allowed to last for more than a year or two. In the mean time, the early zeal of Crusaders will get dissipated. And the people will have to thank themselves for the failure. That is how the System, the ruling elite and its ally, the Great Media, will convince them, in fact, with the arrogance of *One Who Knew* and also the *One Who Knows Best Even Now*. The victims of *thuggery* would have no reply.

It is important to underline that the possibility is that the chain of events here after may not be in the nature of cyclical repetition. As noted earlier, the new fervour is the response of ordinary people, particularly women, to the catastrophe which we as a nation are facing. The simple womenfolk are no doubt unaware about its real nature and also all its dimensions. But they know that they are the real victims and the worst sufferers of the policies concocted up there. They are able to percieve the impact and implications in and around their little world of the *mohalla* or the village, not the great spectacles in the *Global Village*, for the former is what matters so far as the ordinary people are concerned. That small world of theirs is being destroyed ruthlessly. The young people, particularly the educated in the village, on whom their parents have invested their fortunes with great expectations, are no longer interested in hard work in the field. They cannot find a place on the other side for which their parents are supposed to have invested and for which the educational System is supposed to have prepared them. The young person him/her self may also have slogged for the same. '*She*' may be of some '*use*', but not '*he*'. He is un-

wanted and is on the reject list on both counts. The only escape for this '*Reject of the System*' is, the spirit of the Pot, the Pottle and the Bottle with ubiquitous spells of trials at Casinos thrown in-between.

This *Economics of Disaster* for the youth continues to operate incessantly as helpless parents are obliged to part with whatever they have, including their gold and land even as they realise the unreality of the image-chase, which is taking one victim after another on every side as they look around. That day is not far off when young girls from battered rural homes will be flocking to the bewitching urban centres with nothing else but their own selves to offer, as is happening in Thailand, which nevertheless continues to be proud of its great civilization. The nation will be shamelessly rejoicing in breaking records in the blooming global 'service- sector', comprising teenage sex-tourism classed as dollar spinning industry and gracious trade.

The last ditch battle of the ordinary people against the undeclared war of rejection waged against them is very much there on the ground. '*Can we afford to lose this last battle?*' is the simple question which we the ordinary people must ask ourselves and answer categorically. The simple answer, so far as the common man is concerned, if he is presented the question in its naked form, is NO. The women in this case have emerged as a new class, excluding perhaps those in the higher urban class, so far as drinking is concerned. They also naturally imbibe the traditional Indian ethos on this vital issue concerning the very survival of the common man as a respectable citizen. In a way, the running down of the traditional system, noted in the 1969 analysis, is being checked to some extent because of the rise of women as a class and their closing of ranks on the single issue of prohibition. As we will note presently, the tribal people facing the worst challenge in their history are also emerging as a strong force in the social dynamics concerning the use of intoxicants.

It is thus clear we the ordinary people cannot afford to lose in this undeclared war, for in that case everything, even 'our' national honour, would have been lost. '*They*', on the other side, are no longer a part of the nation notwithstanding their ar-

rogation unto themselves the aura of nationhood. 'They' comprise what has been described as the '*Anti-Nation*'. The common man who alone comprises this great nation, in case the undeclared war is lost, will be thrown away in the garbage as a reject. This is precisely what is happening in Africa and also Latin America on a large scale. The struggle in India will be the last uprising of the real people against a Globalised State, still formally known as India, that is, *Bharat*, which would have virtually lost its status as a nation.

Significant Development in Tribal Areas

The new wind has started blowing from an unexpected quarter which the ruling elite cannot still believe. A new paradigm of struggle strategies and action is unfolding and taking shape in what they believe to be wilderness, far away from the maddening crowds of the so-called civilised world in the remote Scheduled Areas inhabited by the tribal people. The chances are that the continuing confrontation between the State and the people there will ease and cease as the collectivity of people comprising the face-to-face village community in the new frame of *Gram Sabha* become institutions of self-governance as envisaged under Art 40 of the Constitution. The *Gram Sabha* will be competent to manage the day-to-day affairs *as per* the customs and traditions of the people in the light of, and within the frame of values of a socialist democratic republic, as enshrined in the Constitution.

While extending the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution relating to the *Panchayats* to the Scheduled Areas, the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, clearly spells out the plenary powers of the village community, that is, the *Gram Sabha* in simple, clear and categorical terms as -

'Every Gram Sabha shall be competent to safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs of the people, their cultural identity, community resources and the customary mode of dispute resolution.'

This provision is comprehensive in so far as it covers the past, the present, the physical environment and internal social

relations of the community. Moreover, the competence of the *Gram Sabha* has also been translated in concrete terms. Certain powers have been endowed directly by the Parliament and some others are expected to be bestowed through appropriate state legislations.

Thus, not only the *Being* of the collectivity in a habitation or a group of habitations managing its affairs according to its customs and tradition has been accepted but its '*competence*' to do so, not as a favour, nor in terms of any scheme of devolution, but by its very nature, as a natural right of *swayambhu* entity preceeding the State, has been acknowledged and enshrined in the Constitution. There is titillating ebullience all around, full of confidence for managing affairs in keeping with expectations by a responsible collectivity of the tribal people in a truly democratic polity. It stands out in sharp contrast to the degeneration of the representative system at all levels, not behoving even ordinary members of a cultured society. The first item on the agenda of these Little Republics-in-the-making is obviously the conduct of the village assembly or the *Gram Sabha* itself. The propositions are very simple and straight forward. *Gaon Ganragya* means that it is the people, as a collectivity, who are in command of the affairs of the village or the collectivity. It implies that every member of the collectivity must be in command of his own self with no extraneous influences whatsoever.

The most vital question, therefore, for the *Ganrajya* to become a reality is the perception and the behaviour of the ordinary members of the village community comprising the *Gram Sabha*. Every member of this *August Assembly* must be his normal self. But what are the essential conditions for a person to be his normal self? Can a person imbibing that '*Elixer of Life*' be considered to be a person in command of his own self? The answer is given by *Hando* of *Mavalibhata* who was gently taken away from the village assembly the previous evening for his sticky and defiant behavior. 'What were your upto, *Hando*, in the evening?' asked I the next morning as he came to see me. 'What? I was not there!' was his simple and succinct reply with unarming smile of unembellished rusticity. Yes, he was

right. It was not *Hando*. The spirit, which he had imbibed, that was in command as that time. So the issue of intoxicants is vital for the very survival of *Gaon Ganrajya*. The question is whether the people shall be in command or the Spirit shall be in command? *Hamare Gaon me Hamara Raj* or *Hamare Gaon me Mad ka Raj*.

That is not the dead end of the logic which uncovers the ugly reality which every one knows, but all in vain in the absence of a decision-making forum. The command over resources including forests, *yes*, but to what purpose? The need for gainful employment, *yes*, but to what purpose?, and such like questions are at the top of the agenda commanding avid deliberations in the general assemblies of *Gaon Ganrajyas*. The logical sequence is simple - command over resources and employment generation means more money; more money in the hands of a tribal who cannot even think of the 'morrow, let alone being concerned about it, means enjoy so long as money lasts with drinks unending; intoxication means quarrel and beating of wife and children. So should we work now for atrocities at home? Will it not be preferable to do nothing and stay put where we are? The conclusion is that temperance has to be the first item in any frame of self-governance for the community.

Now it is here that the new Law breaks a new ground. It envisages that- **the 'State Legislature shall ensure that the Panchayats at the appropriate level and the Gram Sabha are endowed specifically with the power to enforce prohibition or to regulate or, restrict the sale and consumption of any intoxicant.'** It is the collectivity, the people together, constituting what has been termed as the *Gram Sabha*, now will be the sole arbiter of all aspects relating to intoxicants. While the *Gram Sabha* shall be at the centre, other institutions including *Panchayats* will play the necessary supportive roles in this regard.

This proposition has been made explicit in Madhya Pradesh while making special provisions for the Scheduled Areas in the Madhya Pradesh Excise Act, 1915. Sub-section (3) of Section 61-E of the said Act envisages—

(3) If a Gram Sabha prohibits manufacture, possession, sale and consumption of any intoxicant in its area, the following consequences shall follow—

- (a) No new manufactory of intoxicants shall be established within the jurisdiction of the Gram Sabha.**
- (b) No new outlets for sale of any intoxicants shall be opened, and the existing outlets, shall be closed with effect from the first day of the next financial year immediately following the issue of order of prohibition.**
- (c) No person shall manufacture, possess, transport, sell or consume any intoxicant within the Gram Sabha Area.**

The administration has been enjoined to implement the decisions of the Gram Sabha effectively under Section 61-F.

In this frame, it is for the community in the form of Gram Sabha to decide whether it will be free-for-all so far as the use of intoxicants is concerned or total prohibition, or as something in-between. For example, those who are addicts may be allowed to drink but with a strict stipulation that they shall not do so in public. The community may decide that the young people shall not be allowed to fall in the new trap which is being laid for them as a part of the global cultural invasion aimed at destroying the community and take over of the resources at its command. The sale of intoxicants in any form may be totally prohibited because the community in its wisdom may decide that no vested interest in any form shall be allowed a foot-hold in the System which is now at its exclusive command.

Logic Shall Unfold Universally

This is a welcome development, nay, the *Turning of Tide*, in the Scheduled Areas. But there is no reason why the concerned collectivity of people elsewhere, by whatever name it may be designated, should not have the same authority. In fact, as we have been persistently pressing as a basic premise of a democratic polity, this is an unalienable natural right of the collectivity comprising the community which no authority, including the State, can take away. The Covenant adopted at the time of constituting India, that is, *Bharat*, is clear on this point. It sets the necessary boundary conditions for the functioning of

the new State. The Covenant envisages that the State shall endeavour to enforce prohibition. It has failed in its duty to do so. Nay, the Ruling Elite has misbehaved and betrayed the nation. It has deceived the simple people, who are not in a position even to understand the way the System, which has been entrusted this responsibility, functions, let alone being able to unravel its machinations.

It is a pity that leadership of all colours, of all robes and of every vintage did not rise to the occasion, behoving a democratic polity. It did not have the courage to challenge the State in arrogating unto itself the decision about a matter concerning the community in the most intimate way, with no secrets unknown, with no pretensions unchallenged and with no solicitations unravelled.

It is distressing to note that the competence of ordinary people is so casually questioned by one and all amongst the ruling elite, nay, the entire urban-organized sector. Even a simple allusion about empowering the people is derisively ridiculed by the so-called educated people, arrogant and audacious. It is this misplaced role perception which really sustains the ruling elite, who get not only infected by the Imperial virus the moment they reach the Chair, the symbol of authority, but who are indoctrinated from Day One in the lore of falsehood in the Great Institutions of so-called Learning dedicated to the pursuit of truth. The so-called representatives of people become a part of machinations against the people even in this vital matter. The saddest part is that the idea and the ideal of prohibition were trivialised through rituals, particularly in the name of Gandhi, and even through the ritual of enforcement of prohibition.

The way the revolt of ordinary women, particularly those belonging to the disinherited class, has been handled may prove to be the last insidious act in this series. As mentioned earlier, this revolt has been sought to be contained in the same old worn-out receptacle of State-managed *sarkari* prohibition. The irony is that in the mean time even that administrative apparatus of the State, which could have yielded the desired results, if there was necessary will and determination, has been reduced to the state of pulp. Today it is incapable of even conveying

the messages undistorted from the Citedals of Power to the operational levels in the field. Its commitment has got circumscribed strictly to the protection and promotion of the interest of the privileged and the ruling elite, or the *Inheritors*. In fact, it has virtually become an instrument of *loot* in the wake of blind pursuit of socalled development of Imperialist Capitalist vintage under the umbrella of democratic institutions of the same mould. So the promoters of Prohibition are mincing money and amassing wealth in collusion with the dons of underworld who are openly commanding the entire System from illicit distillation to clandestine supply. *The glorious victories of women in Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and Haryana, thus, have been totally negated through a cleaver and calculated twist, taking advantage of their innocence and absence of any viable alternative even by well-meaning political leaders who are all in a hurry and concerned mostly about arrogating credit of people's moves.*

The result is that the great victories may be embalmed and entombed any moment as sacred relics. The human nature would have been declared victorious as the socalled Prohibition is enforced and formally scrapped with the rise of each one of such tides and their wane. The fading away of these perterbations as the tide of socalled modernity becomes overwhelming will mark the final victory of the neo-Imperialist Capitalist Global Axis and its collaborators, the psuedo-national ruling elite as the Disinherited disintegrate and waste out. They are destined to lose whatever has remained with them, undisturbed and unperturbed, under the serene embrace of *the Elixir of Life*.

It is a matter of shame that the ruling elite in our country, in defiance of the Constitutional mandate, *albeit* soft, has so far not only acquaisced in favour of the spirit but voted for it in various forms and colours. But, as stated earlier, the people in some of the tribal areas have shown the way, even though their tradition is not fully in consonance with the normal stance of Prohibitionists. They are voting against the Regime of the Spirit, with the dawn of participative democracy in their Little Republics, as noted earlier, on pure and simple pragmatic considerations. This decision of theirs is in tune with Women's Re-

volts elsewhere and is expression of the changing wind and the people's response to the new challenge.

'Why this dispensation for the tribal people alone?' is the question which, therefore, has come to the fore even before the President gave his assent to the new law concerning the Scheduled Areas on Dec 24, 1996. In fact, 'Our Village Our Rule' is the central pillar of our movement, *Bharat Jan Andolan*, committed to the objective of structural transformation of the existing Imperialist frame which is continuing with its mission of cracking the community and damning the man now under a different cover and tantalising colours of globalisation and liberalisation. 'Control of the community on all matters concerning intoxicants' is one of our important programmes. On both these counts, not to speak of the over-all paradigm of our movement, it is alleged that we are running against the so called current of history or the ethos of time. This is a superficial view which can be best described as '*of the Elite, for the Elite and by the Elite.*' As, stated earlier, the elite have the audacity to elevate their sectional, superficial and irrelevant perception as the national perception. The real current of history, which is flowing underneath, is just the other way round, whose first real expression, initial and rudimentary, is there to be seen in some of the tribal areas.

So far as *Bharat Jan Andolan* is concerned, the first move in the tribal areas on these counts has been both as a part of our strategy and also as an expression of our deep faith in human values which have survived the most amongst the simple *tribal* people. We believe that once the process comprising spontaneity of human responses sets in, which can find free expression only in a face-to-face community, it cannot be contained in any formal structure. It will honour no artificial dividing lines, be that related to ethnicity, religion, caste, creed or even nationality. We are happy that the issue of community asserting itself against demonic forces, national and international, has now become a live issue. The centrality of community has been recognised by the formal System now in the Scheduled Areas. All political parties will have to take note of this change. They will have to deal with the Community and convince it on all issues,

instead of playing with individuals using all devices at their command to capture and tame them. The process has already begun with the declaration of 1999-2000 as **the Year of Gram Sabha** by the Central Government. Empowerment of Gram Sabha is being debated in many a quarter, which, to begin with, may not mean much. Nevertheless the force of its logic cannot be ignored for long because it is bound to gather momentum as the message spreads.

Hopeful Signs in Madhya Pradesh

We are happy to note that Madhya Pradesh is the first State in the country which has accepted the principle of *Gram Sabha's* primacy. Orissa has also followed suit. The arena in the beginning, however, was limited and included only matters concerning the *Gram Panchayat*. The scope, therefore, concerned the so-called developmental functions alone. These matters in the scheme of things of the ordinary people are secondary, if not peripheral. Nevertheless, this role of *Gram Sabha* signifies a qualitative change compared to the general scheme adopted by the States even under the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution, which has been incorporated in the Constitution after a great fanfare. In Madhya Pradesh the scope has been expanded in 1999. It now covers, which is most significant, management of natural resources including land, water and forest.

The *Gram Sabha*, as is generally constituted under the law, may not provide the ideal setting for a face-to-face community which can be the only primary unit of participative democracy. Even M.P. had adopted the same pattern in the beginning. It was only later on, in response to the concerted action by *Bharat Jan Andolan* that the new provision was made giving centrality to the *Gram Sabha*.

The new law for the Scheduled Areas, which comprises about forty percent of the geographical area of M.P., has provided an opportunity for detailed discussion and debate about the role and the structure of *Gram Sabha*. One view is that the special provisions for Scheduled Areas, which are unexceptionable, can be adopted for the entire State. But this proposition

ignores the ground reality concerning the state of the community and its character in other areas. The community in the tribal areas is a functioning entity. The differentials within the community are not large, even though inequality is not unknown. In fact, it is on the rise, largely as a result of State intervention. Elsewhere, the village community is rather fractured. Further, inequality within the village itself is not insignificant. Nevertheless the issue of the role and responsibility of the community at the village level, or the *Goan Samaj* in the form of *Gram Sabha*, is vital for the future of democracy itself and cannot be ignored for too long. As stated earlier, once a new process has been started after the recognition of *Gram Sabha* and assigning it central role in the affairs of the village in the Scheduled Areas, it cannot be contained within that frame. There is urgent need for an appropriate strategy to facilitate proper unfolding of this inevitable process of the community assuming new roles and responsibilities beyond the Scheduled Areas as well.

The demand for Prohibition which has been raised in Madhya Pradesh, in the trail of struggles in T.N., A.P. and Haryana, largely by women's organisations, has provided a good opportunity for taking some vital decisions in this regard. The easiest way is to respond to the demand, as has been done in other States, and to pursue the usual course of state-managed, which also is largely stage-managed, *Sarkari* Prohibition. It is bound to get bogged down in the usual controversies like those of 'idealism *versus* pragmatism', 'command *versus* persuasion', 'raising of resources *versus* social sector investment'. Even if woman-power prevails, the gains in the form of prohibition cannot be lasting. There is no reason why and how can M.P. strike a drastically different chord compared to the tunes being played elsewhere in other States?

This question is now being taken up, in the light of the new frame for the Scheduled Areas, by a number of Organisations, mainly Women's Organisations working for Prohibition. The serious reservations about state-managed *sarkari* prohibition are shared by many including the political leaders and administrators. A consensus is now emerging in favour of the frame adopted

for the Scheduled Areas by the Parliament and also the State Legislature in this regard to other parts of the State. In concrete terms, it means that the *Gram Sabha* every where can have 'the power to enforce Prohibition or to regulate or to restrict the sale and consumption of any intoxicant'. The basic question, however, is to take this message about consensus amongst the social activists and political leadership to the people and prepare the community to assume the new responsibility before the next vital step of enacting a law is taken.

Set-back in Haryana

As noted earlier, Haryana was the last State to bow before the Woman-Power and enforce prohibition. But unfortunately even before one year of the passing of that law, violation of prohibition became rampant. The people were sceptical about it with no possible solution, or a way out. They have been helplessly witnessing the Great Triumvirate- the Politician, the Official and the Contractor- making money in the open. A possible way out, on lines similar to those for the Scheduled Areas empowering *Gram Sabha* in all matters concerning prohibition, was suggested by some activists in a few meetings at different levels in Rohtak district. When the proposition was placed before groups of ordinary villagers, there was a shine in their eyes. Their response was spontaneous 'Oh! If that happens, who can dare to defy us?' The question which hanged heavily in the air at the end of these meetings got expressed with a deep sigh in the form of a counter question 'Can this happen?' Their reaction was natural, based on their experience so far. *They had no doubt about the community, the Gaon Samaj, tackling the issue. Yet, they could not believe that the State could ever concede that power to the people.*

When the same question was placed before groups of so called representatives of people, the answer was invariably the same irrespective of the level of respondents, village, block or district. It was always in the form of a counter question but with a difference 'How can ordinary villagers discharge this responsibility?'

The divide between the people and the formal System, whether it comprises the bureaucrats, the people's represent-

atives, the professionals, et. al., is now complete. The dysfunctional System, which has become largely irrelevant, simply cannot afford to face the people, once the people are formally conceded the power of self-management, which is so natural and is also sanctified by the Constitution. The establishment must deny not only the competence of the community, but its very existence. This is what they have been doing for half-a-century under the aura assumed by them as *Inheritors of the Raj*. They have so far succeeded in ensuring that the issue is not even alluded to in any forum. The people's side has gone totally unnoticed.

The triumvirate has prevailed in Haryana. Prohibition has been scrapped with usual ploys. The *mafia* this time appears to have learnt from experience and taken advantage of rampant disillusionment particularly amongst the educated rural youth. They have been 'encadred' for the final game with assured victory as the *mafia* perceives. Even the Panchayats are being sought to be coopted through an offer of a share in 'the wages of sin'. Nevertheless this cannot but be a passing phase as the ordinary people, particularly women, in the natural setting of the community, whose very *being* was denied so far, resume their onward march taking some lessons from their peers in other states.

THE FINAL ASSAULT

The message in these assertions by the people in T.N., Andhra, M.P. and Haryana referred to above is clear and loud. The ordinary people are unanimous on the issue concerning intoxicants. As I had noted three decades back, even a person who drinks, like *Hando*, accepts it as something wrong. He would earnestly wish that his son is spared its ruinous embrace. This issue does not admit of any divisions in *the community of the Disinherited*, who are its worst victims, be it caste, creed, ethnicity or religion. The consensus on this issue proves the persistence of the spirit of community, howsoever undiscernible it may be. It is not our case that ideal situation prevails at the ground level. Many an undesirable feature are plaguing the community. But they are persisting because the process of internal change has been effectively prevented first by the alien rulers and now by their successors. This was a part of the nefarious design to break the community so that the imperial hegemony could never be questioned and become permanent.

The *Imperialist Raj* did not succeed in its design. But its mission was ironically taken over by the national ruling elite with the objective of making its hegemony perfect, beyond reproach, beyond any challenge by the plebians. This game now is, more or less, off. It is so largely because the ruling elite got inceded with the sharing of *loot* before they could consolidate their position. In the process they have got exposed. Their legitimacy is now being questioned by the *Disinherited* well in time before they could be finally dumped by the Rulers as human waste of no consequence and no value.

And the most vital point in this phase, which the *Disinherited* are faced with, is the clear choice of '*Waste out or Assert*,' '*Act or Perish*,' '*Do or Die*,' even as the neo-Imperialist Capitalist Axis is tightening its straglehold. Moreover, eventhough there may be some confusion and many doubts about the na-



ture of other elements of the conspiratorial strategy of this Axis, including the lure of consumerist development paradigm, there is unanimity on one issue, that is, *the use of intoxicants as a weapon of assault and its catastrophic consequences for the people*. Any continued indulgence in this extravaganza is bound to be disastrous. This point may be conceded as a fact of life even by the rulers and the vested interests. But only it cannot be an expression of their conviction. It will be by way of ostensible strategic retreat. They gain more in this bargain than what is lost by creating confusion about the way the real issue facing the people should be and can be handled. The people so far have been told generally about two choices only, that is, state-managed *sarkari* prohibition and morally binding abstinence. Both of these possible choices, by their very nature, are inadequate. Each approach has its own set of flaws. But the most serious infirmity in either of them, which is lethal, arises from the non-association or even non-recognition of the really concerned and the only effective partner conceivable in this venture, the community.

Now that this illusive element has been identified and the vital role of the community in matters concerning intoxicants has been accepted even by the State in the Scheduled Areas throughout the country, as also for general areas in Madhya Pradesh, a final assault against this evil can be launched with confidence. Our proposition is simple. So far as the State is concerned, it should accept the policy of *'hands off this vital social issue concerning use of intoxicants, which has far-reaching economic consequences and is crucial even for the very survival of the community. Let the responsibility for its management vest unequivocally with the community which alone can be so deeply concerned about it for the simple reason that any mismanagement can cost its very survival.'*

We are not indulging in romanticism. We accept Community as the pivot with all its weaknesses. In this case, even the possibility of a community deciding in favour of unrestrained indulgence need not be ruled out, nor should it be a matter to be apologetic about. As the decision, for good or bad, will be that of the community, what ever may be the end result, the cause

and effect relationship will be clear to the people. They will realise that it was their own decision which is responsible for the catastrophe, if any. Therefore, it will be the people, who would learn from their mistakes and could decide, if they so choose, just the other way round. If there are any black sheep amongst them, who may have led them onto a wrong path for some personal gains, or some other ulterior motives, they will get exposed. It is an opportunity to learn from mistakes at the level of the people who are concerned. The story so far has been that it is the people, who even in respect of basic issues, are being obliged to sway from one extreme to another as per quixotic decisions of the State and its minions, which are not always uninfluenced by the vested interests.

The people, particularly women, have already demonstrated their determination to meet this challenge. They have asserted their will even against the all powerful State. They, however, have been trapped by the contraption of State-managed *Sarkari* Prohibition, simply because they could not even think about any other alternative, or a way out. No one else had the courage of conviction about the role of the community and its efficacy, notwithstanding the tall wordy claims made otherwise. Once the people are on their known ground, their own village and the community which they comprise, there can be no secrets, no subterfuges, no *alibies*. The issues and the decisions, therefore, will have to be clear and their implementation pragmatic. No vested interests can operate from behind the scene as there are no screens in the open forums. Even if they try, they will be exposed in no time and will have to face the wrath of the people.

The woman-force, which has been able to shake even the State from their feigned slumber and calculated inaction, without any doubt will be able to be on its own and command the community, in which they comprise the better-half, on this vital issue which not only concerns their personal selves but, what is vital, their children. It is this mother instinct, which makes woman an indomitable force in crisis situations. About the consequences of drinking they have no illusions.

The assertion by the people on this vital issue will be in the nature of the Response of the People to the Challenge from the

dark forces working for their decimation. The issue of intoxicants is no doubt the most vital one in this onslaught, but not the only one. It is a part of the nefarious design for global hegemony by the neo-Imperialist Capitalist Axis. Our position is that once the people, as a community comprising the *Gram Sabha*, are able to assert on one point effectively, which is within their comprehension, the most important gain in that process will be in terms of the confidence which they will gain, the first-hand realisation of the potential of their collective power and, last but not the least, activation of the community itself for onward march. Once the community becomes active and begins to take stock of the situation, realises the nature of challenges which it is facing and sees through the subterfuges, it will be able to meet them, one by one, moving from strength to strength with no bounds of any sorts whatsoever to curb its progression.

The foundations would have been laid for a truly democratic polity at the village level, the *Gram Ganrajya*, and also a non-centralised polity at higher levels. What can be attended to by the *Gram Sabha* will not be interfered with by the *Panchayats*, whatever can be attended to by the *Panchayats* will not be interfered with by the Governments at the State-level and whatever can be attended to by the State Governments will not be interfered with by the Union Government. At each level, there will be full realisation of their answerability to the people, who no longer will comprise an amorphous mass, or a crowd, who no longer will have to reconcile with performing the ritual of voting once in five years and then be treated like non-entities, or even worse, as subject people or slaves. They will now comprise what can be best termed as *Gaon Ganrajyas* of vibrant communities. They will have their feet firmly set on the ground of their hoary traditions. They will also have, at the same time, the benefit of enlightenment from the new advances in ideas and experiences all over the world.

To conclude, the issue of intoxicants has become the proverbial last straw on the camel's back. The women have started revolting against the State, though without realising its real significance. These revolts are of the worst affected against the global Imperialist-Capitalist expropriation and oppression. The

victims as women have to close their ranks even as the operators have successfully contrived internecine warfare amongst the disinherited masses across dividing lines of all descriptions—caste, ethnicity, region, religion and such like. It is a distressing spectacle that the State has sought to frustrate this uniting initiative through specious measure like *sarkari* prohibition and associated confusion about the issue, the roles and the responsibilities of all concerned.

Nevertheless, fresh wind has started blowing from another war-front in the tribal areas where the community as a whole happens to be pitched against the State on the broader issue of self-governance. Accordingly, the very authority of the State to meddle with such issues like drinking, which should be in the exclusive domain of the community, has been questioned. This point has also been conceded by the State. The community every where is responding responsibly. They are enforcing temperance from Day One, the moment they become aware about the new found authority. Total prohibition is also invariably accepted as the final goal, which, however has to be reached in stages. The number of cases where the *Gaon Ganrajyas* have decided to opt for it in the first phase itself is not insignificant. This issue is universal which makes the potential of women's revolt in general explicit and adds a new dimension to that movement in the entire country. Let the State follow the precedent of the tribal areas and concede the authority of the community every where to manage this aspects of its social life.

The struggle of women against drinking, thus, assumes epochal significance. Let all those who believe in real *janwad* or people's power join hands in this simple struggle on a simple issue which can become a struggle of the oppressed against global Axis of Imperialist-Capitalist forces. It is the community and the community alone which is competent to manage its affairs in a democracy. We reject all those laws which violate this simple tenet of democratic polity. We make the beginning with the most vital issue of drinking and assume the social responsibility. Let the State play the necessary supportive role behoving the System in which people are supreme.

PART-II

(Being the Essay on 'Prohibition and Economic Development, *Or Can We Afford to Drink ?*' Published by All India Prohibition Council, New Delhi, April 1969)

PREFACE

This essay is an effort to establish the proposition that enforcement of prohibition is essential for the economic development of the country. For too long, attention has been largely focussed on the moral and ethical aspects of the issue. While there is no intention of minimising the importance of these aspects, it is necessary to look at the problem in the perspective of the overall design of economic development in the country.

The argument presented in the essay is that non-enforcement of prohibition diverts resources needed for the urgent tasks of capital formation--both human and physical. Basically, it is an impediment to the modernizing process in the country. The problem is not perceived in this way because of the curious fallacy of perception on the part of the so called modernizing elite. It is not only the mental distance that separates it from the masses that is responsible for the wrong perception of the problem--there always is a certain distance between the elite and the masses--the basic defect of the modernizing elite in India is its over-whining desire to gather the fruits of development before it has taken place. This leads to paradoxes that are too numerous to mention. Palatial houses co-exist with slums without causing any discomfort to the elite beyond occasional rituals of allegiance to the concept of democratic socialism. The dichotomy between the consumption oriented values of this elite and the unorganised amorphous mass of people below spells not only economic but social disaster as well. Prohibition is, in a fundamental sense, symbolic of this dichotomy. The author will feel rewarded if the essay stimulates discussion on this vital issue.

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INTRODUCTION

The Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Constitution enjoin upon the State to 'endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption, except for medicinal purposes, of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health'. During the twenty years after Independence, we have slipped back --only Gujarat and Madras have complete prohibition, other States have been progressively relaxing their prohibition laws. In a way the Resolution passed at the Goa session of the A.I.C.C. is symbolic of the failure of will to implement the constitutional directive. That it should happen in the year of centenary celebrations of Gandhiji's birth is a sad commentary on the prevailing trends in national life.

It has been made to appear that the central point in the debate on prohibition is the 'self-evident' fact that problem of poverty, disease and human misery must take a higher priority over social problems like drinking. Prohibition is a social reform measure which should better be left to the voluntary efforts of individuals and social organisations. Receding to a lower priority in the Government programmes, its implementation can be thought of only subject to availability of resources which are scarce and committed to items needing more urgent attention. On the contrary, excise appears to be a valuable source of revenue for financing the urgent programmes of economic development and relaxation of 'prohibition' becomes desirable and in the interest of the people !

The 'prevailing opinion' which counts appears to be that the social behaviour of the people should be left to themselves while the State should concentrate on programmes of economic development. The people can themselves decide what is good or what is bad for them. It is in this context that one of the leading dailies of Delhi flashed the decision of the Goa A.I.C.C. as 'Die-hards win the Battle'.

There are two basic factors responsible for such an atmosphere. First, the vocal and articulate section of the society is highly biased and ethnocentric and, therefore, is led to believe in the 'self-evident truth' of this analysis without even the slightest doubt about any alternative approach. Secondly, prohibition even by its supporters has been too much identified with Gandhiji and with its ethical aspects. The economic and social consequences are hardly touched. The well meaning average citizen is, therefore, led to think of it in terms of some moral exhortations and naturally opts for a programme which emphasises real economic problems.

In this article, we will try to see the motivation behind this bluff, analyse the real nature of the problem in the context of hard economic realities of our national life. The question we address ourselves to is 'whether we as a nation can afford to drink? A rigorous analysis of the problem based on modern sociological and economic theory has been attempted.

Certain Fallacies Examined

Before we proceed to consider the main issue of this paper, it would be useful to expose certain fallacies, which have caused much distortion in the present day thinking.

(i) Misaggregation of consumer commodities

Higher per capita consumption by itself is generally taken to be an index of economic well being of the community. This concept has been borrowed from the West where the economy is able to satisfy the basic physical needs of every citizen ensuring minimum standard of mental and physical health. In this state, it can be presumed that the consumption of non-essential and luxury items is not at the cost of necessities and, therefore, does not compromise the basic standards of living. As additional income goes to satisfy the 'higher' or non-essential needs of the individual, the difference in the levels of income in these countries, in a way, is indicative of different standards of living. Increase in the total production of consumer goods of whatsoever description will, therefore, generally indicate a higher level of economic well being.

In a developing country, the picture is entirely different. A large section of the population lives at subsistence level and even minimum basic necessities are a far cry for most of them. The product mix of the aggregate national pie is very important in determining the actual level of the well being of the community. So long as minimum basic needs of every citizen are not satisfied, the production of a non-essential item, which either directly reduces the output of necessities or diverts resources from those lines of production, is bound to depress the level of national well being, notwithstanding the higher statistical figure of the national product.

Thus if at time t^*

$$P=N+E$$

(where P is the total national product, N the part comprising necessities and E the remaining)

and at time t'

$$P'=N'+E'$$

then $P'>P$ is not sufficient for higher level of well being,

It is necessary that both $P'>P$ and $N'>N$

In fact, it is quite possible that even when $P'\leq P$, there may be a higher level of well being if $N'>N$.

The consumption pattern is not only an indicator of the present level of economic well being but it also determines the potential for future development. The expenditure on good food, good education, good housing, good clothing is not only in the nature of ordinary consumption expenditure as in the West but in the nature of investment in human resources. Therefore, any consumption at the cost of these essentials not only lowers the existing level of well being of the community but also eats into 'capital formation' itself, the very engine of economic growth.

* In this paper at places relationships and propositions are stated in mathematical terms with a view to make them abundantly clear. A nonmathematical reader may leave out the mathematical portion without experiencing any discontinuity in the development of the main argument.

> means 'greater than'.

(ii) 'Public opinion'

The impression which one gathers in India, particularly in the metropolitan towns, is that it is some dyed-in-the-wool traditionalists or misled idealists who alone have an obsession with prohibition. The allegation that bootleggers and anti-social elements are among the staunch supporters of prohibition is also not uncommon; it is primarily adduced to ridicule the whole idea of prohibition. It is said that 'the people are not bothered about this problem.' But we have to see as to who are these persons who claim to represent the 'public opinion' on this vital issue.

That the common man was in favour of prohibition is evident from the resolution in 1937 of the All India Congress Committee, the then undisputed leader of public opinion, to introduce prohibition and also from the fact that there was national consensus in 1950 to enshrine it in the Directive Principles of State Policy.

With the passage of time, however, certain groups, simply because they happen to occupy a strategic position in the socio economic structure of the country, got an opportunity to give their sectional and narrow views the status of national consensus. A careful survey of our national scene will bring this analysis in focus. We will find that it is only the pseudo-modern*, an almost microscopic minority group, which seeks to project its own half-baked values as the values of the entire national community. This

*The term 'pseudo-modernism' needs clarification. Many persons sometimes assert that adoption of some attributes like western dress and mannerism, drinking etc., are necessary and sufficient conditions of modernisation. They are neither necessary nor sufficient. In actual practice, what really happens is a selective adoption of those elements both from the western and the traditional spheres which strictly further individual selfish ends. For example, many 'moderns' will not care for any of the traditional values but would be ultra-traditional in matters like dowry. Similarly, they will extol the 'equal right' of a boy and girl in choosing a life partner but would not hesitate in visiting scores of respected families and rejecting the girls in an essentially unequal social situation. The fervent championship of the 'individual freedom' ideal in respect of drinking also falls in the same category. In the absence of a better word, we can term this social behaviour as pseudo-modernism'.

so called elite has a strong hold on certain institutions like the english press, and, therefore, can function as an organised pressure group and is able to create an impression of massive popular base where none exists in reality.

The english press, in fact, is its mouth-piece at least in this respect. This group is well integrated at the all-India level because of the community of interest, the higher mobility of its members and effective control over mass communication media. It is, therefore, able to act in unison raising almost an instantaneous outcry as one body even at the slightest attack on its privileges from any corner of the country.

Beneath and under this group live and work broad masses of Indian humanity having nothing in common with it, its ethos and ideals, notwithstanding its pretensions to the contrary.

The attitude of the english press is too well known to be supported by examples. Its reaction on the eve of the Goa A.I.C.C. meeting is typical. It took this opportunity to hit the supporters of prohibition the hardest, mustering all its strength, through strongly worded editorials, features, cartoons, caricatures, etc. The prohibition policy has been portrayed in a most ridiculous fashion; its supporters dubbed as die-hards; and Government accused of neglecting its legitimate functions and unnecessarily meddling in the personal affairs of the citizens. In the bargain, it has come out as the champion of the poor man's cause !

The language press has not been completely immune to this persistent and massive propaganda; yet being nearer to the people and consequently having better understanding of their problems, it is not that far removed from reality. Consequently, many of the language papers have expressed regret at the decision of the A.I.C.C. not to enforce prohibition during the Gandhi centenary year; many others have noted the dire economic and social consequences which will come in the wake of relaxation of prohibition. A representative cross-section of the language press opinion is as follows:

Samuyukta Karnatka, in its editorial considers prohibition as a necessary social reform. It has forcefully brought out that "the money now lost by Government through prohibition is nothing

compared to that which will be lost ultimately by a society given to drinking." The *Jame-e-Jamshed*, a daily from Bombay, satirically captioned its editorial as 'Liquor is safe.' The Gujarati daily '*Jai Hind*' regretted the resolution as 'having shattered the very base of prohibition programme by postponing the total prohibition by 7 years.' The Marathi daily *Batmidar* flashed the news as the 'Last Rites of Prohibition in Panjim.' The *Prajatantar* from Cuttack observed 'there is no doubt about the great harm which drinking inflicts on a man's economic as well as spiritual life.'

The *Nav India*, a Tamil daily from Coimbatore, called for a firm decision followed by firm action for total prohibition.

'Sada Desh' from Patiala observed that 'drinking is an evil, it has no benefits, drinking breeds so many other evils. The government servants, the elite and the political leaders should take concrete and constructive steps to eradicate it.'

'*Nav Meni*' from Madras regretted that although prohibition is a Directive Principle of State Policy, it has not yet been implemented.

Even those papers which are skeptical about prohibition being a success in the light of its past record tried to analyse the problem and suggested the conditions which would be necessary for its implementation.

'*Swadesh Mitram*' a daily from Madras put two conditions for its successful implementation, viz., (i) the people should accept this programme; and (ii) the State should not think about the relaxation of prohibition as a source of revenue. It concluded 'Something is better than nothing. Movers of Resolution should try for its implementation within its stipulated time.'

No research is necessary to establish as to which part of the press in our country is nearer to the people and represents more faithfully their sentiments. There is no doubt that drinking is as old in India as the civilization itself; but through a process of social evolution over the last two millenia a climate has been created in our country where even those who drink consider abstinence a desirable state and respect those who do not drink. Thus, drinking is not accorded a social valuation, although it is tolerated.

The reverse is the case with the small social elite which has arrogated to itself the representative character of the people. There is a general social permissiveness for drinking, nay, there is social valuation in favour of drinking. And those who do not drink are tolerated.

What is the real public opinion and who gives expression to it is clear from the above discussion.

Some Basic Questions of Social Dynamics

Having cleared the decks about some prevailing fallacies, it will now be apposite to consider some basic questions of social dynamics. There are two aspects which need a clear exposition: (i) the role of the State in the purely social life of the people; and (ii) the nature of the invisible pressure of the elite and modern sector through 'demonstration effect'*

Role of the State

In the process of planned economic development, intervention by the State in at least certain key areas of economic life has come to be accepted as desirable even amongst developed countries and as inevitable in the developing countries. However, there is no such unanimity or consensus about its role in the social life of the community. The central point of democratic life is said to be the people's free choice for their social and cultural mores subject to their honouring similar rights of fellow citizens.

In the first instance, we have to note that social transformation is an integral part of economic development. It is, therefore, not possible to clearly set aside purely social activities which have no economic significance. Secondly, a seemingly insignificant step in economic field may have far-reaching cumulative effects on the social life of a community. The State, therefore, cannot completely absolve itself of this responsibility and be a silent spectator to the happenings in the social sphere which is

* 'Demonstration effect' stands for the process wherein the consumption pattern of the economically better off sections of a community or rich nations are imitated by other sections or poorer nations respectively.

being subjected to stresses and strains arising from the directed and rapid economic growth. In the contemporary Indian scene, we have to view this process with reference to two important factors: (i) the special features of the Indian social life and the direction of change induced by the State; and (ii) the alignment of various forces and pressure groups in the existing socio-economic matrix.

The Indian Society has had a tradition of decentralised existence; there has been no organised direction or interference by State in the affairs of an individual. The broad catholicity of the Hindu religion and the absence of an organised church have been, to a great extent, responsible for this special feature. That is why our social structure allows expression of all shades of opinions and a wide spectrum of individual practices. Consequently, the local communities, particularly the village community and caste panchayats, have been powerful influences in providing the guidelines for the behaviour of their members. Most aspects of the social life conformed either to the 'caste valuation frame' or to the 'village valuation frame'. More important ones aggregated in the form of regional traditions and a few of the highest order into national traditions. The situation, however, is changing fast. The hold of traditional institutions is slackening, both under the impact of positive state intervention in a number of fields and under the impact of industrialisation and of its associated features. The individual is on his own and not subjected to a well defined set of social compulsions.

In the absence of an effective frame of reference being provided by the immediate social group, the new powers which the State and many other organised groups have acquired by virtue of their access to modern science and technology acquire a special significance. It is no doubt true that the State, because of its exclusive control of sinews of power, has been able to interfere in many aspects of an average citizen's life right from the earliest days of organised social living. There were, however, severe limitations; even in the mediaeval period, the coercive power of the State was not absolute and its control could not be detailed and all pervasive. Social groups did not necessarily succumb before even the full pressure of State authority, though sometimes they had to

withdraw within themselves and thus led, what may be termed as, "a stagnant life" to preserve their autonomy.

The emergent situation in the 20th century is entirely different. The State can afford to exercise absolute authority on the lives of the citizens--democratic institutions are, in a way, an attempted guarantee against this eventuality. This is why questions like whether the State should or should not interfere in the economic and social life of a citizen are persistently raised and discussed.

The coercive power which science and technology has placed in the hands of other organised groups, however, is of a more subtle nature; it does not very often find an overt expression. Nevertheless, vested interests are sometimes highly organised and wield great manipulative power. Particularly, they can make their presence felt through 'demonstration effect', and through organised propaganda with the help of powerful mass-media.

The manipulative power of organised groups becomes manifold in a transitional phase when the social structure is undergoing fast change. The traditional forces are no longer as effective as they used to be; new mores have yet to find universal acceptance and organised expression. This state may be termed as a 'frameless state' and it prevails till the process of reorganisation has gathered sufficient momentum. During this period of transition organised groups of the older social order with diverse political, social, economic or religious complexions, become active; some new ones are also born. There is a struggle for supremacy and wider acceptance amongst them. These groups may have different bearing on the process and the direction of 'desired change' as accepted by the community as a whole. The goals of some of them may be in the same direction as of the society itself--these are beneficial groups. Yet others may be neutral in this sense; these may be apolitical or areligious groups. But there are some groups whose interests run counter to the direction of desired change; their organisation itself is with a view to further the interests of their own members even at the cost of other groups or the entire society. These groups rarely come out in the open with those aims; their professed aims may be neutral or even may seem to be beneficial.

The groups of all the three categories described above come in contact with the body social at numerous points. Some of them wield great influence by virtue of representing a powerful group or having the support of other powerful interests or working under a charismatic leadership. The others may have no such support or rallying point. Some of these groups may experience resistance at points of contact with the community or from other organised groups; on the other hand, some others may have even succeeded in inducing a state of indifference therein.

Some interest groups may take advantage of this 'frameless state'. They do counter spontaneous opposition in the body social at various points, yet no mechanism is sufficiently developed for bringing together the scattered nuclei of resistance and for challenging effectively the interest groups. Even a small organised interest group is, thus, able to march victoriously through the 'frameless' mass meeting individuals only as individuals.

If this group happens to be of the beneficial variety it serves the social end. But a malific group may also take the same advantage and retard the process of change or give it a wrong turn. Herein lies the importance of the role of the State. The State must identify the beneficial and the malefic groups and support the former while curbing the latter. The State has been progressively assuming this role in the economic field, though within certain limitations of other overall policies. This has been made possible because the results are largely quantifiable which gives confidence and boldness to the policy makers. In the areas of so called purely social activities, however, the attitude of the State is different for reasons alluded to in the earlier paragraphs.

The responsibility of the State in this context arises for two reasons. Firstly, it is the inherent duty of State itself to see that no organised group takes undue advantage of the helpless conditions of the people and their lack of comprehension of the contemporary situation. It is precisely on this ground that a number of social laws are enacted to protect the weaker sections in the society. In some ways, the entire society is in the position of 'weaker sections' in the face of powerful vested groups.

This duty of the State becomes almost a moral obligation in a fast changing society. In the process of planned economic development, it is the State itself which has taken upon itself the responsibility of determining the direction of change. Theoretically, the scope of this change may be the economic aspects of national life only. But, as already stated, the socio-economic matrix is indivisible. When the State, with one hand, attempts to supersede the existing structure of social institutions in the interest of economic development, it becomes its bounden duty to interfere even in those spheres which may be formally recognised as social aspects but which have far-reaching political, cultural and economic consequences.

The changes made since independence in the marriage and the succession laws of the Hindus are important examples of the action of the State in purely social sphere. The amended law may purport to be a purely social enactment but it is producing far-reaching consequences in the economic life of the community. The argument in support of undertaking the legislation was that in Hindu society women suffered from being placed in an unequal position vis-a-vis men in matters like inheritance, conjugal rights, etc. The State had, therefore, to redress the balance and introduce what are revolutionary changes in the centuries old traditional concepts that had governed Hindu society. Whether or not the new law has brought about corresponding changes in the intellectual and cultural mores of the Hindu society may be a matter for debate. It is not relevant to the argument here. Also the fact that in the existing social structure in rural India, it has produced results which may, at least in the short run, not be wholly beneficial, does not invalidate the argument we have presented. The cardinal fact is that the State did not abdicate its responsibility on the ground that the subject matter of legislation lay primarily in the social sphere.

In this context any profession of a policy of *laissez faire* falls to ground. There can be no sectional intervention in the life of a community undergoing fast social and economic change. The social and economic life has to be taken as one and the State has to come into the picture wherever vested interests tend to take advantage of the 'frameless' situation and have the upper hand.

Invisible Pressures of Pseudo-modern Elite

The powerful influence of the ruling class on the behaviour pattern of the common man has been acknowledged from times immemorial. To a doubt raised by King Yudhishtira, Bhishma Pitamah said:

कालो वा कारणं राज्ञो राजा वा कालकारणम् ।

इति ते संशयो माम्भूद राजा कालस्य कारणम् ॥

(महाभारत— शांतिपर्व, अध्याय ६९ , श्लोक ७९)

That is, the answer is indisputable. It is the king who is responsible for the general atmosphere prevailing in a nation. In the absence of a better word we may call this prevailing atmosphere the 'Time Spirit'.

In the socio-economic situation of our time, since there is no king, this cause and effect relationship is not very clear. In a democracy, however, the people's representatives are charged with the responsibility of guiding their destiny and hence may be likened to the king in the verse quoted above they should be the embodiment of the 'Time Spirit.' But in the nascent stage, they may not invariably have the decisive influence. The most important contender for the role ascribed to the king by Bhishma, is the upper class. It is a highly articulate group, informally organised and has a stranglehold on sinews of power in all spheres - economic, social and administrative. It is this class whose members are thinly spread all over the social structure and possess all the trappings of a ruling elite. By virtue of its position, it tends to determine the 'Time Spirit'.

In certain areas of social or economic behaviour, the people as a whole, including the upper classes themselves, may be subject to a 'legal frame' given to themselves through their own representatives. The 'legal frame' and the 'Time Spirit' acquire a dynamic relationship. The 'Time Spirit' tends to influence the 'legal frame', while the 'legal frame' may assume a supportive role in the evolution of the 'Time Spirit'. To the extent that the ruling elite is in consonance behaviourally with the 'legal frame', this dynamic relationship is direct and effective. But a divergence between the valuation matrix of the elite and the 'legal

frame' dampens this two-way relationship. The 'demonstration influence' of the ruling elite tends to play a more decisive role in the formation of the 'Time Spirit', and there arises a widening of gap between the 'legal frame' and the valuation of the elite. This progressive divergence has been the most nefarious element in our social ethos. The elite tends to disregard the 'legal frame'; vested interests give their own valuation frame the aura of public opinion. Rationalisations of the elite behaviour come too readily. First is the attempt at playing down the opinion leadership role of the elite. On the other hand, the elite, when criticised, assumes an air of injured innocence. The argument generally runs: 'The elite and other classes are completely free to decide their own social and personal conduct. The elite as a group chooses its path, gives a valuation even to drinking. But that is its private affair. In such a situation, how can the elite attract any responsibility, moral or otherwise?'

But rights and duties are two faces of the same coin. Having a right to privileges denied to the vast majority in the society (which includes adequate income to sustain a standard of living) should mean added responsibility as well. If the behaviour pattern of the elite is injurious to the general social good, it must bear the responsibility of following a socially desirable behaviour pattern. This is specially so when there is growing divergence between the 'legal frame' and its behaviour pattern and it itself is the 'custodian of law'. We, therefore, turn to examine this aspect of social dynamics in the following paragraphs.

A Sociological Model

With a view to a clear exposition of social processes, we conceive a four-sector model of our 'universe'* Vertically we may divide the 'universe' into two groups (i) urban and (ii) rural. Horizontally we divide it into (i) higher and (ii) lower. It may be clearly stated that this is a highly simplified model. It is very difficult to precisely define the terms 'higher' and 'lower'. There are interpenetrating socio-economic sub-structures based on caste, property-ownership, wealth, etc., and a clear higher-lower

* 'Universe' stands for the totality of population in the country.

dichotomy is not possible. We can, however, visualise the higher group in the rural setting comprising members of the higher castes, better off persons from middle caste groups and exceptional persons from lower castes. In the urban setting only economically better off can qualify for higher class grouping, others may be clubbed in the lower classes. These groups, thus are: Urban higher (Uh), Urban lower (U1), Rural higher (Rh) and Rural lower (R1).

We can also identify the stereotypes* for all the four groups. Here again there is over-simplification. In defining the stereotypes, the extreme characteristics are taken to clearly bring out the contrast. The definitions may not fully conform to the social reality. Every group prescribes a set of behavioural alternatives for its members. Those who do not conform to it are treated as deviants. We may identify two behaviour patterns (i) the traditional and (ii) the pseudo-modern.

'Pseudo-modernism', in the limited context of the present paper, represents a social attitude where drinking is considered to be good; those who do not drink are deviants and are tolerated. 'Traditionalism' represents the other extreme where drinking is considered to be bad; those who drink are deviants and are tolerated. The urban elite (or Uh), by and large, can be said to represent the pseudo-modern group. Amongst the rural group, both higher and lower sections, i.e. (Rh) and (R1), can be said to subscribe to traditional values. The position of the urban lower (U1) group is not so clear but it leans more towards the traditional norms than towards pseudo-modernism. This description approximates the reality of our social situation to the first order.

We may now lay bare the social dynamics of drinking by postulating relationships amongst the various elements of a social situation.

*Stereotype in sociology, signifies 'a set of attributes generally accepted to be associated with a group of people.' For example, the Kshatriyas are brave, Brahamins are learned, Vaishyas are worldly wise, etc. are stereotypes of Kshatriyas, Brahmins and Vaishyas respectively. These attributes may or may not have a basis in existing reality.

Proposition I

The number of those who drink depends on the group attitude to drinking.

This is the most important relationship. The two extreme attitudes we have defined are the 'traditional' and 'pseudo-modern'.

If N is the total population, of which t are 'traditionalists' and 'pseudo-moderns' and a is the number of those who drink and α the number of those who do not drink, we may say

$$a + \alpha = t + p = N$$

$$0 \leq p, t \leq N; 0 \leq a, \alpha \leq N$$

We can define a coefficient $g = (p-t)/N$ which measures the group attitude towards drinking. It can be easily seen that $-1 \leq g \leq 1$. The functional relationship of Proposition I can be put as 'a is a function of g' or $a=f(g)$.

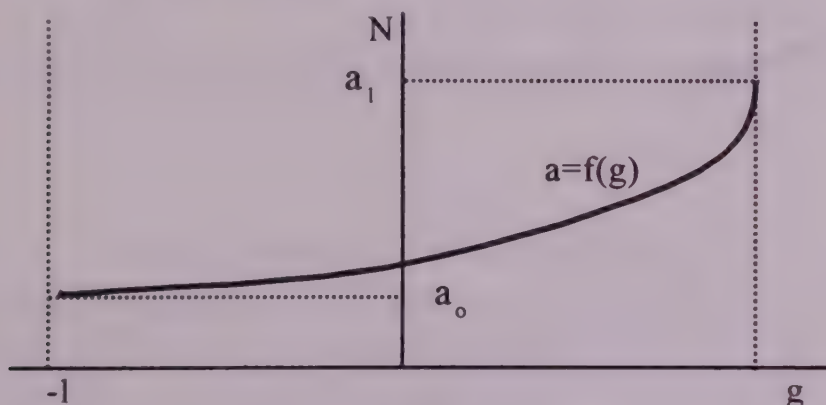


FIG 1

The function $f(g)$ will be as shown in figure 1. There will be some persons (a_0) who will drink even when the entire group believes in traditional values (i.e. $g = -1$). These are the deviants. Similarly, at the other extreme not all persons will drink even when the entire group swings to 'pseudo-modernism' (i.e. $g = 1$). Here those who do not drink ($N - a_1 = \alpha_1$) comprise the deviant group.

The behaviour of the curve is interesting. In the early stages when the group attitude is traditional (i.e. when $g < 0$) the curve rises as $g \rightarrow 0$ but very gently. In this sector the rate of increase of number of drinkers falls behind the rate of conversion to

pseudo-modern ideology. In the later stages, when group attitude crosses the zero value, the curve begins to rise quickly and becomes steeper as it moves to the right. This shows when the 'Time Spirit' progressively swings in favour of drinking, a larger number begins to take to drinking than is warranted by the conversion rate to 'pseudo-modernity'.

The fact that factors other than group attitude, like economic condition, also influence the extent of drinking, needs no elaboration. We have not introduced these factors explicitly in the relationship defined in Proposition 1 because these very factors influence both the attitude and the propensity of an individual to drink which, in their turn, determine the group attitude. The important amongst these factors are:

A

- (i) Degree of social cohesion (C);
- (ii) Intensity of Sanskritization*(S);
- (iii) Demonstration effect (D);
- (iv) Geographical mobility and state of communication (M);

B

- (v) Individual's economic condition (E); and
- (vi) Reference group compulsions in favour of better housing, clothing, educating the children (R).

Out of these six, the first four in category A, namely, C, S, D and M are group phenomena while the last two in category B, i.e., E and R relate to the individual and his immediate surroundings. For the purpose of group analysis, therefore, factors in category A only need be considered. Out of them, D and M are functionally related. 'Demonstration effect' is a function of geographical mobility and facility of communication i.e., $D=D(M)$. We can, therefore, take only one of them and proceed with our

*Sanskritisation stands for the social process undergoing in India in the last half century where those belonging to castes in traditionally lower ritual scale have been adopting the customs of those higher up in the scale e.g. wearing of sacred thread, disapproval of widow remarriage and giving up drinking, with a view to rising in the social scale.

group analysis with the remaining three, C, S and D, as independent variables. The normative group behaviour is a quasi-variable** of this system. The normative group behaviour includes group attitude towards drinking as one of its constituent elements.

The following relations can be explicitly stated regarding the group behaviour:

Propositon II

Demonstration effect is more pronounced in conditions of low social cohesiveness.

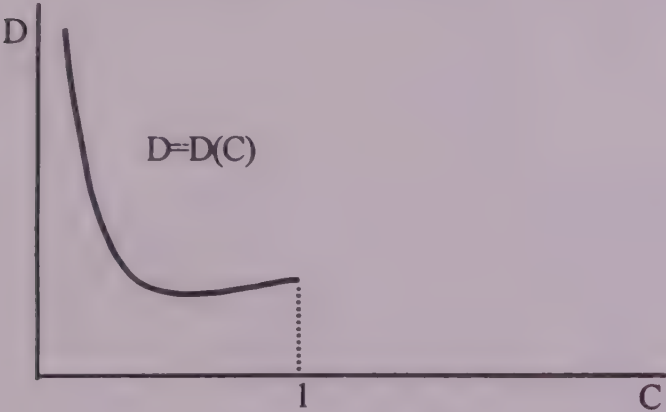


FIG 2

Proposition III

The process of Sanskritization is stronger in conditions of higher social cohesiveness.

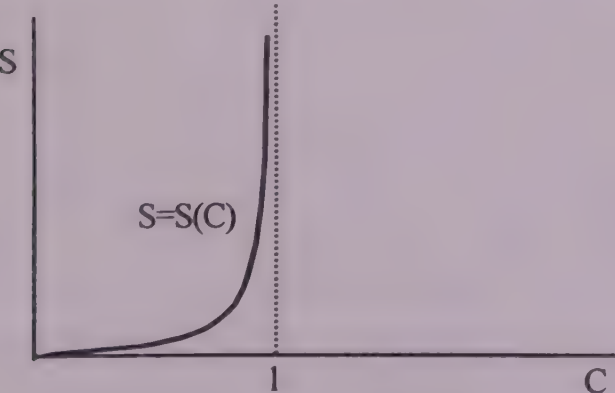


FIG 3

**Qaui-variable is used for a factor which changes only in a comparatively longer span of time.

Proposition IV

Social cohesiveness promotes uniformity of behaviour (U) amongst the members of the group.

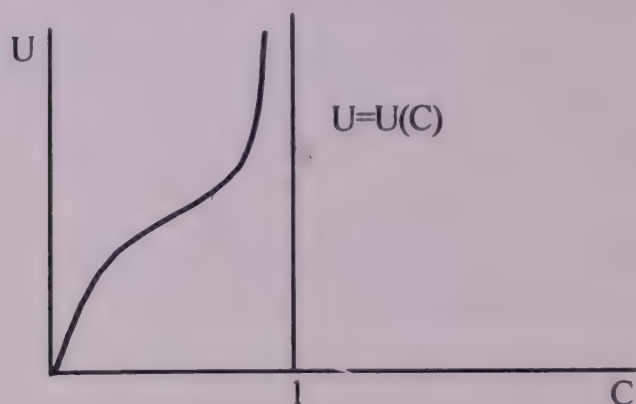


FIG 4

It may be remembered that the above propositions do not throw light on the dynamic behaviour of our group variables. They just give us an insight into their static relationships. It needs no emphasis that C , S and D vary in the time dimension in their own fashion depending upon a host of other socio-economic conditions. We may not go into a detailed analysis of the dynamic behaviour of all of them. But as social cohesion seems to occupy a central position, we may trace its behaviour in the time dimension.

Social cohesion appears to pass through three phases during the transition of a society from a traditional to modern socio-economic organisation. Initially C is very high which is a characteristic of tribal and other stable socio-economic organisations. With the process of economic change, which accords a valuation to change itself, C begins to decline. The downward movement, however, is very slow in the beginning but with time it has a snowballing effect. Long before the process of change has even assumed sizeable proportion, C is at a very low ebb. It continues to be low for a pretty long time. The forces of consolidation do gather momentum but very slowly. Thus, C moves up slowly, the pace is quickened and a plateau is reached; this plateau is at a much lower level of intensity as compared to the

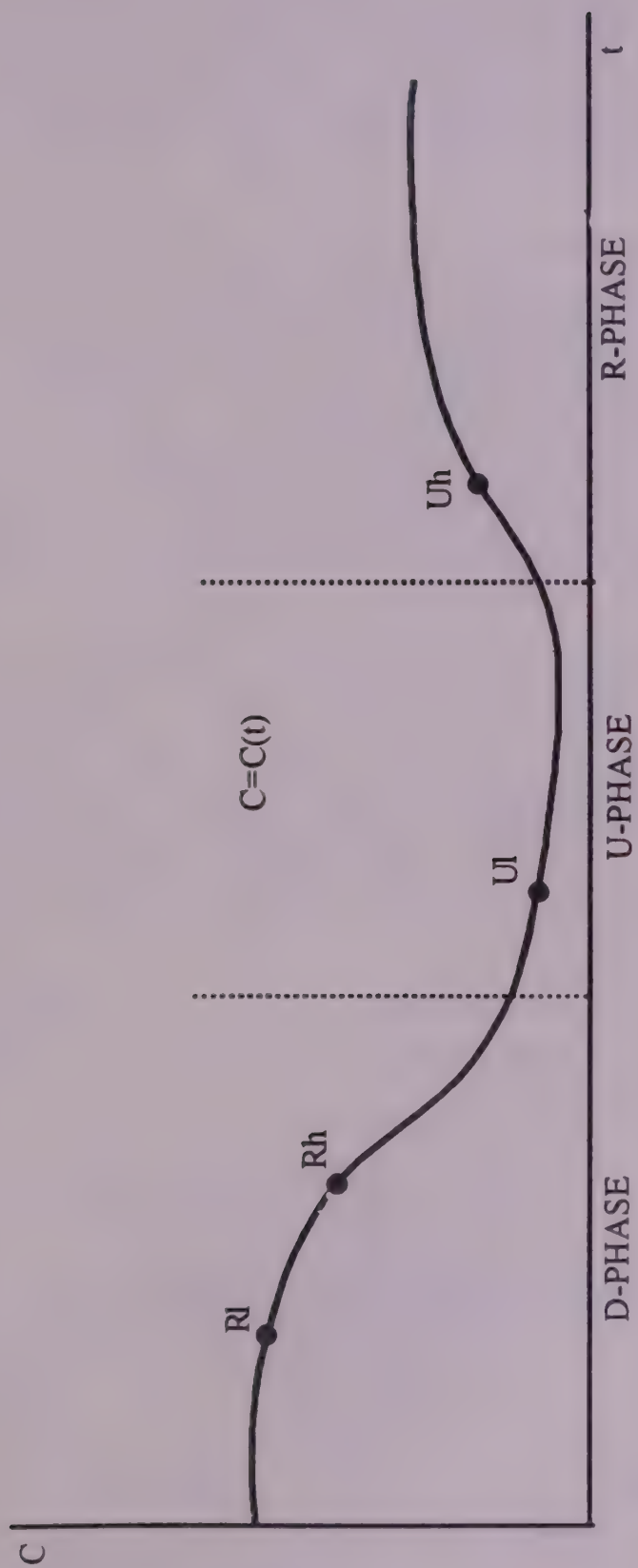


FIG-5

earliest phase. Thus three distinct phases are identified. The downward movement of C can be termed as the 'disintegration phase'; the period when C has a very low value as the 'uncertainty phase' and when C resumes the upward journey as the 'reintegration phase'. Different social groups may be, at any given moment, at different points on the curve $C=C(t)$. We, as a nation, at the present juncture are in the first phase, namely the D-phase.

The present position of the four groups on the C-curve is indicated in figure 5. Thus, the Rural Sector as a whole is in the D-phase; the Rural lower (Rl) has a higher degree of cohesiveness than the Rural Higher (Rh). Also, the rate of change of cohesiveness for Rh is appreciably more than for the Rl. The Urban sector has moved out of the D-phase. The Urban lower (Ul) is in the U-phase while Urban higher (Uh) has moved out of the U-phase as well and is in the early stages of the R-phase.

It may be noted that the passage of all these groups on the C-curve is further complicated by the fact that the four groups are not self-contained and entirely closed. There is a continuous in- and out-flow amongst these groups which considerably influences their passage on the C-curve. The diagram below gives the direction of in- and out-flow amongst these groups. The boldness of flow-curves is indicative of the intensity of the flow-process.

It will thus be seen that Rl is the most stable group as it receives only a trickle from Ul. Similarly, Rh is also quite stable.

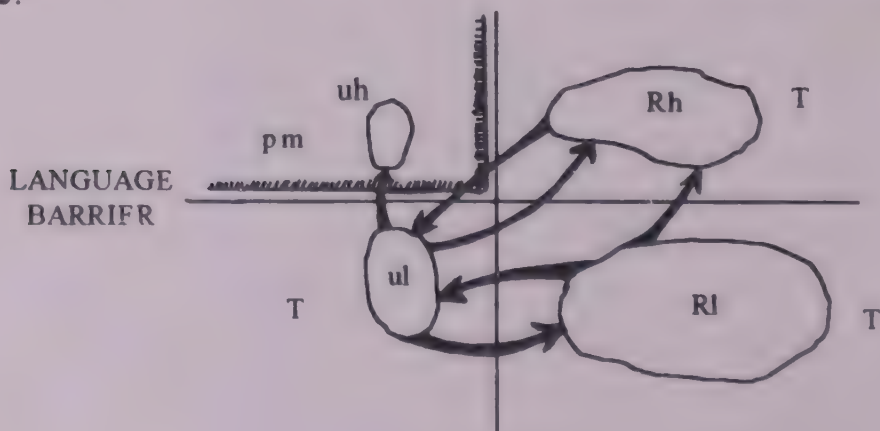


FIG. 6

Within the urban group, the flow into U1 is again very limited, a very small number reaches it directly from Rh and another small stream joins it from U1. Thus, the Urban lower group is being reinforced from the rural community, the members of which are traditionalists and high on the social-cohesion scale. They also maintain their contacts for some time with these areas. As the U1 itself is in U-phase where the forces of tradition and pseudo-modernism co-exist the influx from a traditional group retards its progression towards the R-phase and their journey on the C-curve is rather sluggish.

The inflow into Uh, however, is small and is not strong enough to significantly influence its valuation norms. The language barrier--members of Uh group are strong advocates of maintaining the supremacy of the English language in national affairs--operates to slow down significantly recruitment to the Uh group. The small streams get assimilated very fast as a result of other socio-psychological factors and the progression of Uh on the C-curve, therefore, continues to be smooth and normal. This, in fact, explains the growing alienation of this group in the last two decades.

The social distance between Uh and U1 continues to increase because of this differential inflow both in quality and numbers from the ranks of the R-groups.

We may now summarise the various forces working on different social groups.

Urban Higher:

1. Pseudo-modernity governs its social behaviour;
2. It is in the R-phase on the C-curve. Social cohesion is gradually increasing; and
3. It increasingly absorbs demonstration radiations from other societies and emits pseudo-modern patterns around itself into other indigenous groups.

Urban Lower:

1. This group adheres to the traditional ideals;
2. The social cohesion is at the lowest ebb; it is in the U-phase on the C-curve;

3. The demonstration effect of Uh is very strong; and
4. The forces of Sanskritization are absent.

Rural Higher:

1. The group symbolises the traditional ideals and adheres to it. There is, however, a slow change and perceptible impact of pseudo-modernity;
2. The social cohesion is appreciable but the rate of change is fast and in the downward direction; and
3. The demonstration effects from Uh and U1 are quite strong particularly because of higher level of physical and social contacts with the U-groups.

Rural Lower:

1. The group is traditional;
2. The social cohesion is very high; there is, however, a marked downward shift;
3. The forces of Sanskritization are strong but their intensity is well past its peak; and
4. The demonstration effects from other groups are progressively becoming stronger.

The above analysis makes the urban lower groups the most vulnerable section in our society. Although it subserves to the traditional valuation, this group is facing the maximum strain for two reasons: first, this group has the maximum number of deviants and secondly, it is in very close touch with Uh which professes pseudo-modernity. Also the social cohesion is minimal. In these conditions even slow progression towards pseudo-modern valuation will bring about fast consequential changes in its behaviour pattern.

The next vulnerable section is Rh. In this group there is no force corresponding to that of Sanskritization in R1. On the contrary, it aspires to be the counterpart of urban elite in the rural setting. The impact of demonstration effect is, therefore, maximum. However, the social cohesion is appreciable which stands in the way of a fast changeover. But the slow transformation of the traditional valuation into superficial pseudo-modernity is be-

coming evident. Its pace may quicken and become a strong force in not too distant a future particularly with the powerful onslaught of new means of mass communication. As soon as the first stage is passed, all forces will be pressing the group in the direction of low social cohesion and pseudo-modernity with all consequential behavioural changes.

It is fortunate that, at the moment, R1, numerically the largest group, is the least vulnerable. The forces of Sanskritization are quite strong, social cohesion is quite high. Both U1 and Rh with whom it has maximum direct contact so far adhere to traditional valuation. Fortified, both horizontally and vertically, from force of pseudo-modernity the pace of change may quicken once the traditional valuation gives way completely in the urban lower and/or rural upper classes, as it will bring R1 in direct confrontation with groups adhering to pseudo-modernity. The large R1 group will thus be liable to full assault of pseudo-modernism and its behaviour pattern would change fast.

We, as a nation, are as yet in the D-phase on the C-curve. As soon as we pass the critical point and enter the U-phase the transformation in the attitudes would be so rapid that no force will be sufficient to check it. With the transformation of the valuation pattern, the rate of change from non-drinking to drinking will, with a time lag, approach 'infinity'. The pseudo-modernity will engulf the entire population except a few deviants. And alas! there will be no content of real modernisation whatsoever in it.

The experience of post-Independence period unmistakably points in the same direction. The superficial imitation of the western way of life in the last twenty years has been of a much higher degree than during the preceding century of the British rule. The change in the social climate after Independence is responsible for this. In the pre-Independence era, western dress or western manners was looked down upon as a sign of subservience to the ruling group; the Gandhian movement accorded a high place to simplicity and to the Indian way of life. The demonstration effect of those in higher groups copying western manners was, therefore, minimal. After Independence the situation changed. This constraint was removed and a new philosophy

has gained ascendancy in which everything coming from the West is taken to be desirable as it is supposed to be in some way associated with economic development. The change has been swift and phenomenal. Competent observers feel that India may be reduced to the level of a province of western culture not in too distant a future. We are not making a point that such an eventuality is inevitable. But these observations highlight the dangers inherent in the context of the changing social frame which the country must face and underline the need of a countervailing force strong enough to meet the new challenge.

We may now turn to some empirical evidence to verify various propositions put forward in the above analysis and for conclusions drawn therefrom. The available studies are generally in respect of urban areas only. As they were obviously undertaken with some other objectives in view, there are limitations in using their data. However, we will try to make best of what is available today.

One of the important studies in this area is the one conducted by the Delhi School of Social Work for the Tek Chand Committee of the Planning Commission. Another study which we will refer to is by K.C. Sehgal.

The difference in attitudes of Uh and U1 is obvious from the findings of these studies. For example, the Delhi School study shows that disapproval of one's own drinking is highest among women in slums (57.14%) and country liquor shop group (43.50%) who belong to U1. It is lowest among permit-holders (3.08%), club-members (5%) and upper-class women (17.24%) who all come from Uh. Economic wastefulness is the most important reason for this disapproval. What is more significant is the attitude of these groups to children's drinking. One would like to see his child grow in a way closest to his innermost desire. This men in slums overwhelmingly disapprove (79.50%) as also country liquor shop group (78.33%) and women in slums (66.67%). It is noteworthy that barely 20% amongst club-members, 21.54% amongst permit-holders and 34.48% of upper-class women would disapprove of it. The most important reason for disapproval of children's drinking is 'bad habit'. More than 90% women disapprove on this ground. Incidentally, the divergence between atti-

tude towards one's own drinking and the children's drinking is marked amongst men as a group than amongst women.

Opinion on question of prohibition is also polarised between the two groups. The U1 group has few supporters of non-prohibition-barely 11.76% women in slums, 29.05% of the country liquor shop group and 29.90% of the men in slums who drink are for non-prohibition. On the other hand, there is scant support for prohibition amongst the Upper Urban group--none of the club-members, 3.08% of permit-holders and 13.79%, of the upper class women who drink would support prohibition.

The social attitude gets reflected in the way an individual is initiated. In the urban community both the upper and the lower classes are lower in the social cohesion scale and hence are prone to be persuaded by friends. Thus more than 50% men in all groups were initiated by their friends. But this factor is significantly higher for the upper strata-permit-holders 78.46%, club-members 75% as against country liquor shop group initiated through friends being only 50.84%. This influence continues to be weak amongst women in general but is higher at 41.38% for upper class women as against 23.81% for women in slums. Again, mere curiosity plays a more significant role amongst the upper group. Significantly 'celebration' is more important (18.84% for country liquor shop group and 47.62% for women in slums) amongst the lower group than in the higher group (between 4 and 5% for all classes and 24.14% for upper class women).

After initiation the lower group continues to drink because of habit, to overcome physical discomfort and to some extent relaxation. But the upper group indulges mainly for relaxation, company and to a small extent on account of physical discomfort. There is hardly anyone amongst both the groups who drink for entertainment. Women, by and large, (80.95% in slums and 51.73% in upper class) drink on special occasions and none of them daily. Amongst men it is the upper classes who drink daily (42.50% club-members and 32.50% permit-holders). There is a smaller percentage who drink on special occasions amongst men.

The study divides the drinkers amongst those who are earning heads of families and those who are not heads of families. The permissiveness of the higher classes is reflected in the 'non-

heads' forming a higher percentage of drinkers amongst them than in the lower group.

Also a larger number of educated women taken to drinking are in younger age group than amongst the non-educated.

The above discussion clearly brings out the polarisation of attitudes of the urban higher and the urban lower groups. It may, however, be kept in view that the opinion recorded in both the groups are of those who drink. The attitude of those who do not drink in the two groups may be quite different. If we are able to find group attitudes of the lower group as a whole and the higher group as a whole comprising the drinkers and non-drinkers, it is very likely that the polarisation of opinion of Uh and U1 may be very much more marked.

What percentage from each group drinks is not known. But if we presume that the above samples reflect, even though very imperfectly, the prevailing opinion in the parent groups, then it is very likely that only a small section of the upper urban does not drink, whereas large majority of the lower urban (including what generally is termed as 'middle' class) has not taken to drinking. If the prevailing opinion in the non-drinker group is taken to be for non-drinking, the contrast in the group opinions of the urban higher and urban lower will be very marked.

In our model we have referred to the reinforcement of the urban lower group from the rural areas who bring with them the traditional outlook. This would be reflected in an analysis of group behaviour of those having differential inflows. Cottage workers can be expected to have a lesser inflow than the mill-workers who are proverbially much more mobile. The incidence of drinking in the former group is much higher than in the latter.

It is noteworthy that there* is much larger proportion of women and child-drinkers amongst the cottage workers (39%) than amongst the mill-workers (6%). There may be other factors as well for this difference but the difference in the degree of contact with rural areas appears to be an important one. The same reason, we find, is at the base of the very different atti-

* A Study of 100 families in Delhi whose bread-winner drinks, Jan. '57, by K. C. Sehgal.

tudes amongst the urban higher and the urban lower. A study throwing light on attitude to drinking according to the degree of contact with rural areas would be sufficiently rewarding.

The key role of the elite-attitude to drinking becomes clear from the above analysis. The behaviour pattern of the urban lower group is an amalgam of a number of diverse attitudes. The elite is a comparatively homogeneous group which directly influences the 'Time Spirit' and also the 'Legal Frame'. It is also the most articulate group. It, therefore, attracts the responsibility of giving a healthy lead to the nation. If it fails in this duty, as it obviously does now, there is an urgent need for a countervailing force of sufficient strength, such as not only to match but also overwhelm the small but powerful vested group. This force must arise both from within the State, as it has a moral responsibility, and from the people themselves.

Drinking in a 'Money Economy'

There is yet another aspect of drinking which needs closer examination. Sometimes, reference is made to drinking being prevalent in the ancient period of our history and amongst the present tribal communities. Anti-prohibitionists thereby claim apparent support not only of the 'pseudo-moderns' but also in the hoary tradition of the past. Supporters of prohibition are therefore those die-hards who are neither here nor there. This analysis is another example of 'Satan quoting the scriptures' and of an attempt by the articulate to press every bit of spurious evidence in his own support. Besides negating the persistent and clear verdict of all religions in India and a continued general aversion to alcohol throughout the last three thousand years, it ignores the interplay of economic forces which led to the manifestation of these sentiments.

Drinking in a tribal community is an integral part of their social being. It has no meaning when torn from that context. In an essentially subsistence non-monetized economy a healthy drink is as much a produce of the land as any other article of food. Drinking is in complete harmony and equilibrium with other facets of their social and economic activities. In a social structure based on non-monetized economic relationships drinking is not

an extra burden nor does one indulge in it at the cost of other essentials of life. Through centuries of careful testing, experimentation and evolution, it has become acclimatized to their social setting. It is from the surplus produce which the benevolent mother earth offers to her sons that the tribal prepares a family drink.

But such a state is not permanent. As soon as this happy natural equilibrium is disturbed, harmful effect of addiction becomes quite obvious. Confined to their backwoods and faced with increasing pressure on land, the tribals of Chhota Nagpur and other areas have, of late, been confronted with a new situation. They are drinking at the cost of a balanced and healthy diet. A number of 'religious' movements in other areas, frowning upon drinking in tribal communities, are, in fact, partly an answer to the new conditions and an attempt to establish new equilibrium norms. In the absence of a self-adjusting mechanism in response to a new socio-economic situation many a tribal people suffered and in some cases even became extinct. This is the cost which nature extracts for non-adaptability and noncompliance of its dictates.

Surely enough we in India, as no other people, are not likely to go back to the happy tribal mode of existence. The social mores against drinking must have been a result of response to the challenge of a new situation. Has our socio-economic frame undergone such a fundamental change as to demand a departure from the well-established mores?

In a society based on exchange economy, economic consequences of drinking assume highest importance. We will see in the analysis which follows that these consequences are really grave for those who have passed the state of tribal existence in the nearness of nature and yet have a very long way to reach even the fringe of the world of affluence. The affluent may be said to have attained a socio-economic frame in which drinking again may be in harmony with their social existence as was the case of the tribal society. The elite, being a part of the affluent group, therefore, is not bothered about the economic consequences of drinking. It is for the struggling masses that this question has crucial importance. The introduction of cheap coun-

try liquor was an attempt to bring about a pseudo-equilibrium of the tribal type which, however, proved to be almost poison to the people. The experiment has been an unqualified failure. It only helped the State to bleed the people white, served the contractors to amass riches and provide a rationalisation to the conscience of the affluent who could say that he is one of the vast multitude who drink and who are free to drink only if they so desire.

This has to be made abundantly clear that if drinking gets encouraged because of the liberal policies followed by government, it will neither be the 'tribal frame' nor the 'affluence frame' but the 'poverty frame' of the social setting in which it will operate and will be indulged in at a heavy cost- social, economic and physical. Also it is the cheap varieties of drinks which can be barely afforded by an average citizen even in the distant future. With the per capita income as low as we have any talk of a moderately priced drink, by which the so called 'middle class' swears, is just another attempt to live in a make-believe world ignoring the ugly reality of 'poison drinking', that too by misappropriation by the head of the family to his own 'enjoyment' of that which is really due to the younger generation.

Economic Consequences of Drinking

We may now turn to a formal analysis of drinking and its effect on economic development. There are two sides of any economic activity, namely, (a) the production side and (b) the consumption side. On the production side, questions like resource utilization, both human and physical, and alternative uses thereof, arise. On the consumption side, the important questions are the place of this item on the 'need hierarchy', its effect on the man, as a factor of production, that is, on his physical well-being, on his growth potential and on his motivation to higher production and on productivity. Also, the problems like capital formation are equally important.

The Three Groups

Drinking in economic terms has different consequences in relation to (i) the affluent group, (ii) the higher fixed income

group who prefer to call themselves as 'middle classes' and (iii) the middle and lower classes. It is only the first group which can rationally allocate a part of its income for drinking without compromising any necessities. The second group, which apes the affluent, cannot really afford to drink. This results in a pitiable hankering for 'free' drinks, which may, to say the least, lead to various forms of compromises and even grave misuses of its power and authority. All these have important repercussions on the process of economic development as this section occupies key position in the existing economic structure of the community.

The economic consequences are, however, the most pronounced for the third group which comprises 95 per cent of our people. They can afford to drink only at the cost of some basic necessity. Again, in this group, it is generally the dominant member of the family, viz., the earning male, who drinks and thus brings about family unhappiness through cutting into essentials and even neglect of children. These homes also become the breeding ground of juvenile delinquents who usher early into a full career of crime and anti-social activities.

Each one of these factors has economic implications. At the moment, in the wake of our effort to telescope the social change and economic development, when stresses and strains at various points are making for a high level of social disorganisation, the above factors reinforce considerably that process.

Production Side

(a) Alternative Use of Resources

A large section in our country subsists at a very low nutritional level. Any resources diverted from the ordinary consumption, simply because some minority sections can afford the diversion, must necessarily mean a further dent in that standard. Thus, grapes, *gur* and other raw materials which go into the manufacture of drinks, not to speak of the resources used up in its trade and commerce, in macro-economic terms, are diverted from higher priority uses of building a healthier young India of tomorrow to very low priority, if not outright injurious, uses. It is an irony of worst description that paper and stationery, in our new

found advertisement machinery, should be used to induce the people to drink while the poor boys are most inadequately provided the same resources for their educational pursuits.

(b) Employment Potential

It is argued that alcohol industry and trade provide employment to people and, therefore, prohibition will cause unemployment. In the first instance, it is to be noted that this is a 'high profit'* industry. This industry is further associated with 'high living' like luxury hotels and restaurants etc., where wage structure is highly out of proportion to the general national level. On both these counts, there is, therefore, very little employment potential notwithstanding the total high expenditure of the consumer.

The consumption expenditure on drinking, in the event of prohibition, will either go to some alternative consumption or will augment the savings of the community. In the latter case, it leads to capital formation which, through multiplier effect, increases the employment potential. Even in the case of alternative lines of direct consumption, it can be safely assumed that much of it will go to strengthen the human capital formation. Also most of the economic activities have a much higher 'forward and backward linkage'† in terms of employment potential than drinking. As already stated, drinking industry is a 'high profit' and 'high living' industry and therefore its growth stimulus is dissipated much too soon into other similar wasteful avenues. On the other hand, the backward and forward linkage of ex-

*An industry requiring small outlay on fixed and circulating capital but giving a high margin of profit is termed 'high profit' industry.

†Every industry requires some preparatory activity in certain other industries for its establishment and functioning. For example, a spinning mill requires production of cotton in the fields and manufacture of spinning machinery in other factories. This factory in turn requires steel which is produced in yet another factory. In Economics this process is known as 'backward linkage'. Similarly an industry may induce some future activity by virtue of its own production programmes. For example, the spinning mills will stimulate weaving in other mills or by cottage handloom workers. This process is known as 'forward linkage'.

penditure on clothing, housing, education, even on radios and entertainment, is much higher and growth stimulus of their consumption much stronger and more lasting.

Consumption Side

Unfortunately very little is known about consumption pattern of drinkers and non-drinkers' families. This itself shows the apathy of the academic elite to this important problem. A few studies do analyse the family budgets of drinkers' families, but in the absence of similar data for non drinking groups, it does not throw light on the changing pattern of expenditure as a family moves from the non-drinker to the drinker status. To the best of the author's knowledge it is only in a solitary survey* by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in respect of four towns in Maharashtra (Chanda, Yeotmal, Aurangabad and Nanded) in the year 1958 that the comparative family budgets of drinkers and non-drinkers are readily available. In Tables I & II, the figures have been consolidated for all the four towns and analysed. Some degree of regularity has emerged with the bigger universe of the four towns from which important conclusions can be drawn.

Amongst the poorest drinking families, expenditure on drinking is about 3 per cent, which, in absolute terms, is a very small figure. There is a sharp increase in the proportion of expenditure on drinking as one moved from one income bracket to an-

*'Socio-Economic Survey of Drink Problem in Urban Vidarbha and Marathwada.'

†Income elasticity of expenditure indicates the variation in the expenditure on an item as a result of rise in income. If the proportion of expenditure of the total income on an item remains unchanged after the increase, the elasticity is said to be 1; if the proportion decreases then elasticity is less than 1; if the proportion increases the elasticity is more than 1. For example, an individual spends Rs. 10 on clothing out of Rs. 100/- i.e., 10% of his income. If his income increases to Rs. 150/- we have to see how he spends his additional income of Rs. 50/-. If out of this, he spends Rs. 5/- on clothing, which is just the 10% figure, the proportion remains unchanged and the income elasticity of expenditure on clothing is 1. If he spends Rs. 10/- out of Rs. 50/- on clothing making a total of Rs. 20/- out of Rs. 150/-, the proportion has gone up and the elasticity is more than 1. If he were to spend less than Rs. 5/- say Rs. 3/- out of Rs. 50 on clothing, the elasticity will be less than 1.

other; it reaches the maximum of about 9 per cent in the income range of Rs. 150-200 per month. In the low-income region the income elasticity of expenditure† on drinking is between 2 & 3, which is a very high figure indeed. It evens out to unity at about Rs.200 per month income level and thereafter steadily declines and is less than one. That is, although the absolute expenditure on drinking continues to rise for higher income brackets, it decreases sharply as the percentage of total family expenditure.

This pattern of variation of expenditure is corroborated by some other socio-economic studies. It also fits into the behavioural analysis outlined earlier. The lowest income brackets are at destitution level; there is not even sufficient to eat and therefore expenditure on drinks cannot but be meagre, compulsive and rare. However, as one reaches the upper levels of destitution line, it is found that social norms or reference group compulsions for expenditure on items like education of the child, good housing and clothing remain the same as for the destitution levels. Also the individual has not yet acquired his own private 'reference frame'. Expenditure on drinking increases fast at the cost of otherwise essential items. It goes up to 10 per cent of the total family budget. If expenditure on tobacco is also added, these non-essentials account for up to 15% of the total expenditure.

Findings of comparable studies show that the picture presented in the above study may be interpreted as erring on the side of moderation-sometimes too much moderation. In an earlier survey* in 1951, also by the same Institute, in Sholapur, Surat and Hubli, it was found that average expenditure on drinks and incidentals was of the order of 14.9%, 19.5% and 18.8% respectively. In the lowest income groups expenditure may even touch 30 to 45%. Although the outlay on drinks follows roughly the same trend, in many cases the 'higher' income groups above Rs. 300 per month reported 20-30% expenditure on drinks.

In the other study of 100 families in Delhi, the minimum outlay on drink even in the poorest families was 10.4% and it is surprising that the groups 'Business & Trades' and 'Professions' with average income of more than Rs. 300 p.m. reported 16.6% and 20.0% expenditure on drinking.

*Living Plan of Drinkers' Families in Urban Bombay.

These studies, therefore, conclusively show that the picture presented in Tables I & II is far brighter than may ordinarily be expected.

It is the middle and lower middle levels in the socio-economic frame which are most important. We are trying to industrialise and raise the per capita income. A vast majority of people will move from near destitution to the subsistence income levels; it is the avowed aim of our efforts of economic development. But it is these groups which attain the state of 'framelessness' and are placed on the U-phase on our C-curve. Rising incomes are not accompanied by healthy social compulsions or internal compulsions. And modern science and technology have placed unlimited power in the hands of vested groups which are much too keen to appropriate the benefits of rising incomes and that too in the so called 'service of economic development' itself. The situation is much more dangerous than revealed from the above facts. The above analysis relates to a period where the number of drinkers is a small proportion of the group. As the demonstration effect of the urban elite becomes stronger and the social cohesion of this group gets weaker (i.e. the group moves ahead on the C-curve) we will soon reach a situation where the 'pseudo-modernism' dominates the valuation norms and the behaviour pattern. If things are allowed to drift, the number of those who drink will increase phenomenally; non-drinkers will be exceptions. Even the women, who are at the moment out of this group, will join in substantial numbers. The total outlay on drinking of monthly income in the middle groups would be much higher than the present 10 per cent level.

We have also to note that there is positive association between expenditure on drinks and expenditure on other non-essentials like smoking. While expenditure of the middle income group on smoking is less than 3 per cent in the non-drinkers' families, it is more than 5 per cent in drinkers' families. The drinkers' families also spend on an average, a larger amount on amusement and recreation. These facts go against the normal expectation that drinking by itself provides entertainment and, therefore, may result in a lesser outlay on smoking or recreation. As with drinking so with amusement and recreation, the

expenditure is almost entirely personal to the head of the family. It is the needs of other members which are neglected. We will see below what items are axed by the expenditure on drinking.

The analysis shows that drinking accounts for only a marginal decline in expenditure on food. It is so because a large population lives on destitution or subsistence levels. There is, however, a sizeable dent in expenditure on clothing. Whereas nondrinkers' families spend 10 per cent of their income on clothing, the drinkers' families spend only about 8 per cent. Income elasticity of expenditure on clothing among non-drinkers is slightly higher than amongst drinkers. The differences in expenditure on housing are striking. The drinkers spend only about 2-3 per cent as against 6-7 per cent of non-drinkers. The income elasticity of expenditure on housing amongst non-drinkers is 2.2, a very high figure in lower income groups whereas it is less than 1 for drinkers. That is, the drinkers prefer to spend on non-essentials and continue to live in slum conditions in spite of rising income. The expenditure on personal care and medicine is also lower amongst drinkers.

Expenditure on education and reading is the worst casualty. There is hardly any increase of outlay on education amongst the drinkers' families as one moves up the income scale. For nondrinkers' families there is a uniform upward progression and it accounts for 8 per cent of total expenditure at the middle income levels as against a bare 2 per cent in case of drinkers. The income elasticity of outlay on education is between 2 and 2.5 for nondrinkers as against almost unity for drinkers in corresponding income brackets. The same conclusion is suggested by Sholapur, Surat and Hubli Studies where the average expenditure on education is a bare 1.7, 1.1 and 2.1 per cent respectively. Even in the higher income groups, it may be as little as .1 to .5 per cent when 30% may be spent on drinks alone.

Investment in Man

The above analysis brings us to the direct impact of drinking on economic development. Economic development requires a very high level of investment both in man and in his tools. Institutional finance can, by and large, be provided for the in-

dustrial infrastructure. It can, however, meet but only partly, the requirement of investment in man. Public health, housing, education and even nutritional food are the most urgent items requiring high level investment. In view of the early stage of our economic development, this massive investment cannot be made by government alone; it has to come from the people—properly motivated and fully conscious of their responsibilities. As those in the lower income group form the vast majority, the major contribution has to be from this group living at the destitution level or on the verge of subsistence. The demand for education in the villages and contribution of the poor, both in terms of direct expenditure on education of the child and indirect investment through forgoing the small wage which his child could earn, has been phenomenal. Similarly, preference for good housing has also led to sizeable capital formation in this income group.

From Tables I & II, we find that the income elasticity of expenditure on these items is very high amongst the non-drinkers—the two together may account for even 20 per cent of the total family budget. But if the head of the family takes to drinking, the elasticity is less than 1 and the total outlay falls to about 5 per cent only. The figures are significant. We are striving for a level of saving of about 15 per cent for self-sustained economic growth. But if our policies on drinking are not realistic, about 15 per cent of family income may be diverted from investment in man to non-essential expenditure. Thus at the level of subsistence living, any inducement to spend on anything but the basic necessities is bound to result in withdrawal of resources from investment in man in general and from investment in the next generation of the community in particular. The desirable investment is taking place on a vast scale even at the lowest level in the poorest home. Even if the nation were to make a matching grant to compensate for the diversion due to drinking, which is impossible, it will not be able even to make up partly for the loss because much of such direct public investment will be lost in the 'friction of distributive processes'. Also the pollution of the family atmosphere due to drinking can be hardly compensated by a mere monetary investment. These adverse effects may completely neutralise the public investments. The only way for massive investment in man is through ensuring purposive, self-

induced and planned consumption pattern of the average citizen through conscious and well-directed government policies. Any other approach is bound to be deceptive and hypocritical.

A little arithmetic will further help to bring the dimensions of the problem to focus. The excise revenue of the nation for the year 1968-69 is estimated to be of the order of Rs. 137.92 crores. The consumer on an average spends four rupees for every rupee earned by the Government as excise revenue. On this basis the total drink-bill of the nation is of the order of Rs. 551.68 crores which comes to about 1.93 per cent of the total national income. At constant rates, the total bill for the fourth Five Year Plan period may be of the order of Rs. 2,800 crores. The plan outlay on education, health and housing together is less than Rs. 2,000 crores (Education—Rs.1,210 crores, Health-Rs. 492 crores and Housing—Rs. 280 crores).

The mischief or disaster which non-prohibition can bring about would be clear from the fact that average drinking bill is barely 1.93% as against 10-20% expenditure of an average drinking family. In fact, the order of outlay on drinking in the advanced countries like U.K., U.S.A. and European countries is from 8-10% of the national income. Even marginal changes in the number of drinkers or in the average outlay means diversion of hundreds of crores of rupees from education, health, housing and clothing. And the shift in view under the spell of pseudo modernity and in the name of worship of the new god 'economic development' and other minor deities is by no means marginal. It is bound to be phenomenal and we must go the way of U.S.A. U.K., etc. In terms of total national outlay, such a shift will make insignificant the Herculean yet 'small' plan efforts on nation building activities. There appears to be no choice open but to expose the myth of pseudo-modernity, put our feet on the hard rocks of reality and save the nation from certain disaster.

Drinking and Decline of Human Capital

It is with the fullest recognition of the fact that the workers tend to behave irresponsibly, once they have money in their pockets and the bars are open, that pay days in industrial towns even in non-prohibition areas are declared as dry days. The rate of ac-

cidents in the industry on a day following an occasion involving drinking is proverbially high. The rate of accidents of motor vehicles, railways and in industrial establishments is also substantially higher when the operator is under influence of liquor. Each accident may cost the economy heavily. These losses must legitimately be added to the economic costs of 'non-prohibition'.

Under the influence of liquor, the productivity of worker goes down. In one of the top business organisations in the US, the IBM, liquor is not allowed to be served in any function connected directly and, more important even indirectly, with the affairs of the company.

Drinking is also responsible for absenteeism, late coming, irregular working hours amongst the employees. This is particularly so in the semi-organised sectors of our economy where a small band of skilled workers may sometimes dictate its terms. It is reported by industrialists that under the influence of liquor, workers are less prone to discipline, less regular and sporadic in their output. Drinking, unless reinforced by a very heavy dose of other social inputs, which we can ill afford, is bound to increase irresponsible behaviour.

The most important requirement of economic development of our country at the moment is higher efficiency, greater preparedness to put in hard labour, a sense of discipline and dedication. And these are the very qualities which drinking compromises and tends to undermine completely.

Thus the total debit in the national ledger on account of drinking under head 'investment in man', both in the positive and the negative sense, is staggering.

The play of these forces on the margin of subsistence is still more decisive than would be evident from the general discussion above, as the marginal productivity of consumption in terms of work output is very high at that level. Figure 7 brings out the relationship between wage level and productivity. An average worker requires minimum caloric intake and physical comfort (housing, clothing, etc.) for sheer survival. His productivity at the survival wage level is nearly zero. For every hour of effective work some additional inputs are necessary. Therefore

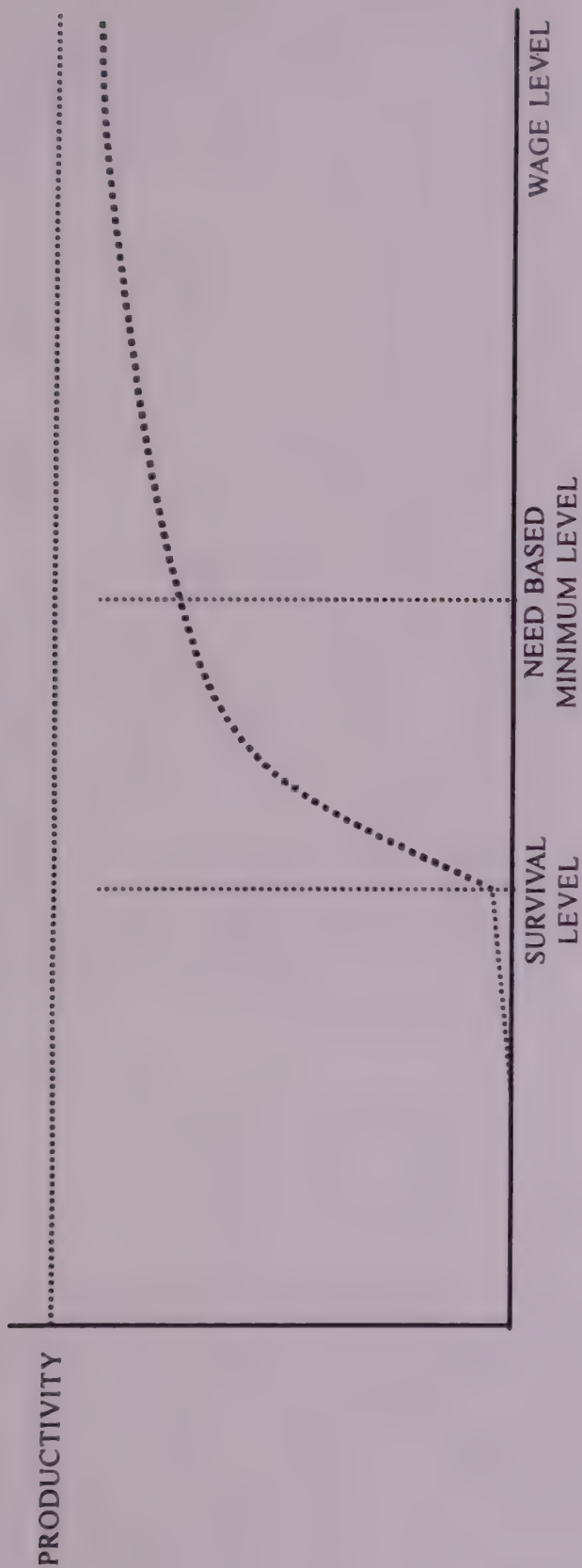


FIG-7

as the wage level rises above this level the productivity goes up sharply. Above the need based minimum level, however, the rise in productivity is very gradual. For example, suppose 1600 calories are the survival level requirement and 100 calories are necessary for each additional hour of effective work. Now, if the worker can afford 400 calories per day above the minimal level (i.e. a total of 2,000 calories), he is capable of putting only 4 hours effective work. But if the extra intake is increased by 400 calories (i.e. the total of 2,400 calories), the effective work output will be 8 hours. Thus for an additional input 400 above 2,000 level i.e. a bare 20% there is a 100 per cent increase in the work output. The same argument applies if there is even a marginal reduction in the enjoyment of basic necessities of life. In the lower income groups the levels of earnings are just at the subsistence levels. A diversion of inputs from bare necessities of 20% may be reflected in productivity reduction of more than 50%. Similarly, additional incomes, if given a proper consumption 'orientation, will produce results in physical terms many times more than the quantum of increase. We have already seen that it is precisely at this level that drinking cuts into existing expenditure outlay heavily as also corners a large share of the additional income there. The total effect on the well-being, productivity, etc., of this 10 to 15% expenditure on drinking will be of much higher order than may be apparent from the small absolute outlay of a few rupees per month. *Drinking, thus, in our context, assumes a key role in the struggle for higher productivity and the well-being of the community.*

It may be noted here that the demand of the lowest employees both in Government and in Industry for a need-based minimum wage has not been met so far. In the calculations of this minimum level, expenditure on drinking, an important item of a drinker's family and all the more important if more than one member of the family drinks, is not taken into account. Even then the minimum wage level is lower than the need-based wage level. This clearly corroborates our finding that in the case of vast majority of drinking families, drinking must be at the cost of some essentials of life. In fact, the welfare concept of a minimum wage has to provide for education of child, medical care, adequate housing, etc. All this exercise is nullified if a family

takes to drinking. *The very purpose for which the minimum wage had been pitched at a higher level is defeated. It is deplorable if it is remembered that the minimum wage in the organised sector is much more than what the nation can afford. Money necessarily comes from the still poorer who are on the starvation line. In the ultimate analysis, therefore the drinking bill is met by cutting into the consumption of the poorest in the land.*

It may be argued that in those cases where the industry can afford to pay a sufficiently higher minimum wage may implicitly, if not explicitly, provide for these mere human weaknesses. Again, here the concept of 'capacity to pay' is fallacious. An industry is able to extract something out of a poor nation because of its strategic position which in a planned economy cannot be considered to be justified. And if this extraction is to foot the drinking bill of this privileged section (which includes even the lowest paid workers in the hierarchy) it can hardly be justified either on moral or economic grounds.

To sum up, we can say that prohibition not only results in direct savings on drinking but also induces savings on expenditure on tobacco, amusement and recreation and interest on loan etc. This may total up to 15 per cent of the total family expenditure. It further results in higher productivity through (a) higher caloric intake, (b) better living conditions, (c) more comfort, (d) a happier and more purposive family life, (e) higher regularity and devotion to duty etc. The relationship between productivity and outlay on drinking and allied items at different wage levels is brought out in figure 8. Each curve represents the variation in productivity of an individual if the wage level remains constant and the outlay on drinking varies. These curves may be termed as "w-income productivity curve". We have seen above that with increase in income, expenditure on drinking as a proportion of total family budget goes on increasing up to a certain wage level and then falls off. We first determine one point on each of the w-income productivity curves on the basis of actual average expenditure incurred on drinking at that wage level. This point will determine the actual productivity level for that wage group. On joining all these points, we get a curve PP, which is the realised productivity curve. This curve, thus, traces the actual pro-

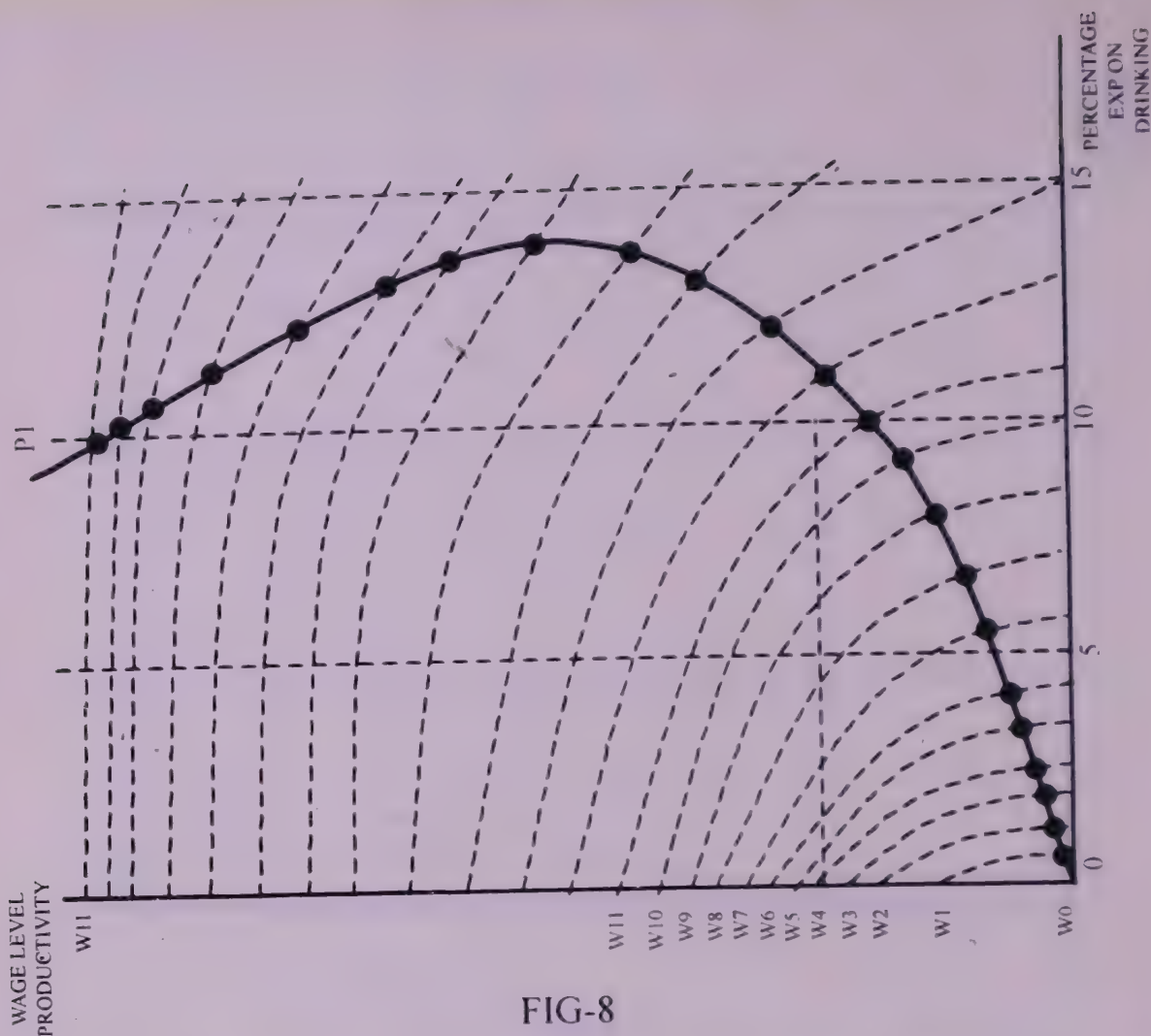


FIG-8

ductivity increase with each quantum of increase in wages and varying outlay on drinking.

At very low wage levels, even a small outlay of 5 per cent may be disastrous. As one moves up in the wage level, the 'tolerance* level', goes up. It is significant to note that at 10 per cent drinking level the productivity of w_{11} wage level is the same as w_3 non-drinking level. Thus purely in economic terms the wage gain from w_3 to w_{11} is completely neutralized by drinking. The productivity curve PP_1 clearly brings out the heavy losses of productivity at lower levels.

This curve also helps to explain the perceptual illusion of the affluent. First, in their case the total outlay on drinking as a proportion of total expenditure goes down. Also, drinking competes with other non-essential items like luxury consumption and,

*The level of outlay on drinking which does not significantly affect productivity.

therefore, does not affect the productivity appreciably for the prevailing lower levels of outlay. Even at 15% drinking level the fall in productivity at w_n wage level is imperceptible whereas a mere 5% at w_6 is ruinous. The affluent group takes its own conditions as valid for the average citizen too and imposes that personal judgment universally.

At the lower wage levels subsist 99% of our people. Therefore, if increase in wage-level is accompanied by higher outlays on drinking, the gains in productivity would be marginal making the unrealised productivity gains of a very high order. Also losses due to conversion from non-drinker to drinker status are even higher as productivity losses due to such conversion are very steep. The cumulative effects with the likely sizeable conversion from traditional to 'pseudo-modernity' pattern are, therefore, bound to be phenomenal. Similarly, the losses in human capital formation itself are astronomical and should be many times the total expenditure on drinking.

Incentive to Higher Motivation

Contentment of the common man is taken to be the most important obstacle in the path of our economic development and, as a corollary, breaking away from this psychological frame is considered as the most effective precondition for sustained growth. Such a diagnosis has been the direct result of our obsession in the post-independence period with the norms of behaviour in the industrially developed countries which has been accorded a high valuation. Any activity which tends to increase demand is, therefore, appreciated and considered as an effort in the right direction. There have been conscious and concerted efforts to decry the old social norms which do not equate happiness with higher consumption but accord a higher valuation to a contented life with minimum needs. *This has been one of the most unfortunate cases of misapplication of concepts of an alien society to an altogether different situation with disastrous effects.* Higher demands, high level of consumption are the end results of a process which has at its base hard toil and austerity of a number of preceding generations in a society who valued hard work as its own reward and had the satisfaction of laying the foundation for a prosperous future. It is like a poor man's son thoughtlessly

imitating the ways of his prosperous neighbour's luxurious ways for improving his material conditions. He confuses the cause and effect relationship and hopes that his new ways may themselves bring about prosperity. He, in the process, ignores the history of the rich family when the rich neighbours' forefathers worked hard and laid the foundation of the present affluence. In fact, *all success stories of economic development are written by successive generations with sustained hard work, on the bed-rock of frugal consumption and high level of capital formation.*

Our elite is in the position of this poor man's son. It misconstrues and misinterprets the laws of economics when it suggests that if people drink, the demand is increased and it will make for a higher effort providing the missing incentive for greater and sustained work. This is a completely fallacious chain of arguments. It will be a travesty of facts to say that the average Indian is the most satisfied being and has no ambitions. An average Indian is no doubt contented; but it is contentment of an equilibrated individual—it does not preclude hard work for a better and a fuller life. The wrong reading of the situation and wrong remedies are creating a new psychology. There is high ambition which is not supported by necessary willingness to work hard, and the individual is unmindful of the high stakes of the new philosophy of competitive living. *Thus some sections of our society have become wedded to the ideology of easy money without hard work; this climate may spread fast to other sections if not countered by adequate social restraints.*

The physical possessions of an average Indian are so limited (and he knows it) that there is no need for artificial boosters of new demands. One has yet to discover a person who does not want his son to eat well, who does not want him to be clothed well, who does not want his son to read and write. These are the felt needs of the common man. He does not know the way out. The answer is not to introduce him to newer demands but to give right direction to his productive effort which he is so willingly prepared to do. Let there be no confusion; there are few persons more hard working than an average Indian cultivator. There are numerous success stories of widowed mothers bringing up their children with the sweat of their brow and seeing them

through even the costly university education. *Contentment thesis is a mere rationalisation by the elite of the social situation which favours him and is, thus, an instrument of self-deception.* Satisfaction, if the state can be so termed, has arisen out of helplessness and it is this feeling of helplessness which has to be broken. *It is the greatest crime of modern times committed by the elite on the vast humanity that it has passed a verdict on the problems of the countryside keeping in view its own narrow frame of values, rationalised its own social position and its role therein and staked the very future of the entire nation in the attempted selfish fulfilment of its own desires, which it can well afford by misappropriating to itself what is not due to it.* It is a falsehood of the highest order to say that an average Indian needs incentive and higher motivation to earn more. This is merely an attempt to rationalise one's own role and shift the blame on to one who is in no position to reply.

Drinking and Alienation

Lastly, drinking is one of the most important reasons of alienation of the modern sector from the traditional sector. It is not necessary to go into the phenomenon of social dualism; but the fact remains that the small affluent group is completely alienated from the main stream of the national life. It lives in a world of its own. It would not be far off the mark to say that it is a 'good drink and its associations' round which social circles are generally formed and in which the elite moves.

Drinking thus tends to be the centre of social life of the affluent. An individual's attitude towards drinking in the main determines his social circle. Like the feudal courts of the mediæval and *talukdari* days, the 'high brow' clubs of today have environs of their own, nay, a 'culture' of their own; it has nothing in common with the larger national scene. It is this high brow group, completely alienated from the soil, which also assumes the 'intellectual' leadership of the society. If Delhi is any indication, one can well imagine the nature of things to come. The student, the intellectual, the top executive, each one appears to be lured by the new temptations and seems to be convinced in his belief that a new society has to be built around a new morality, a new social ethos of 'pseudo-modernity' in which wine must flow freely. In this background, all that does not conform to this

extremely ethnocentric frame is out of date, backward, worth nothing and needs to be completely scrapped. The vast multitude in the country-side is only crawling mass of ants, having no individuality, no aspirations of their own. In fact, if anything is worth something, it must reflect the new ethos. This ideology is at the base of massive assault on contentment, institution of joint family and other traditional social mores. The concern of our elite is not even 'city deep'. It is unaware even of the situation of the lower strata in the urban society and is completely out of tune with the morals and mores of the lower groups. It, nevertheless, professes to carry the self-imposed burden of leading the nation for which it has completely incapacitated itself by its self-imposed isolation and alienation. The whole situation cannot but be fraught with grave dangers.

Resume of Reasons for the Present Situation

From the high watermark of the position when prohibition was enshrined in the Directive Principles of State Policy, a stage is now reached where one State after another is shying away from it, is losing the very faith in this policy. A vote for prohibition is equated to vote for encouragement of boot-legging, for a slower rate of economic growth. It is taken to be an unnecessary strain on governmental machinery, encouragement to contempt of law and, to say the least, hypocritical faith in an outdated doctrine.

The reasons are not far to seek. The national leadership seeped deep in the Gandhian tradition and believing in the essential goodness of man, put complete faith in the existing instruments of administration. They did not prefer to force their will and believed that there can be gradual change in the attitude and aspirations of the upper classes; in the democratic milieu they may identify themselves with the common man. The concept of neutrality of administration was considered to be desirable in a highly subjective area like enforcement of prohibition. Slowly the high nationalistic fervour got dissipated. The highest duty of an individual in the new situation was considered to be performance of his assigned task in an assigned position. The youth, the eternal source of idealism and dedication, found its fulfilment in seeking an appropriate niche in the emergent socioeconomic structure of the community. In the context of a decentralised social structure and

the ruling climate of Gandhian tolerance, the vested groups, which lay low for some time, began their insidious attack on the concept of prohibition. These groups got identified with pseudo-modernity, found useful allies in higher elite, the english press and the neo-rich of the business and industrial community. The shockwaves of demonstration effect, stimulated by wider contact with the West, reinforced the tendency. In this context, the neutrality of the administration and the vociferous lie of the english press played havoc in a socio-economic milieu which was, by and large, 'frameless' and at a low level of cohesiveness. The traditional leadership got discredited and dubbed as being against the new religion of 'progress'. The nation looked to the pseudo-modern for leadership who himself lacked reliable bearing. No rallying point emerged in the new situation. The entire question was given a twist by bringing to the fore the obvious unfavourable features and completely throwing into the background the stark reality and the ugly facets of a policy of non-prohibition. A new make-believe world was created. This falsification of accounts has no parallel in civilized history.

The vastness of the country and the inability of the genuine indigenous elements familiar with reality to join hands at an all India level was a boon to the vested groups and calamitous to the real national good. The language press cried hoarse but it was not heard at the higher level; there was no effective communication amongst this vast group. They continued to be ignored. The english press gave its narrow sectional view-point almost an all-India image and became the rallying point of the reactionary forces throughout the country. Though handful by themselves, they became a powerful force and had the acquiescence of the powerful higher elite which professed to play a neutral role in this campaign.

The local communitarian institutions like village panchayats, which were completely paralysed during the British regime, have again been brought on the administrative scene. But they had lost their vitality during the long period of inactivity. The changed power structure in the village is also not conducive to effective leadership of these institutions. The powers they enjoy are what they have been handed over from above, they generally did not

know their own strength and the newly acquired position in the general administrative frame. With the long tradition of getting orders issued from government headquarters, these institutions were dazed in the new flush of power and authority. They remained neutral or even had no opportunity to express themselves on the important question of prohibition. This circumstantial and imposed neutrality of the local bodies has been taken to be their silent assent; the vested interests backed by the legal authority steam-rolled them into acquiescence. Thus, these bodies have no say in matters like whether a toddy shop should be opened at all within their local jurisdiction or a restaurant can be permitted to sell liquor. It is the administrative machinery which has its final say in these matters subject to compliance of the law on the subject, which is always very general and permissive.

This situation is in complete contrast to what happened earlier in the United States. It was the local communities which took up the cause of prohibition. Their effort culminated in a constitutional amendment. Unfortunately, the vested interests ultimately got upper hand and the step was retraced. Probably in the meantime the nation had entered the affluent stage and economic arguments lost their force, only the moral issues remained in the forefront. Yet, one finds that a number of counties in the USA have succeeded in keeping their areas dry even to this day.

There is no harm if there is an open battle and then the prohibitionists retreat in full blaze of an adverse public opinion. But in India, the anti-prohibitionists are taking the advantage of their organised strength, of the powerful backing of the vested interests and of the ignorance about the real nature of issues involved on the part of the vast majority of the people who believe in abstinence and who are for prohibition. *Thus the anti-prohibition lobby is forcing its will on the hundreds of millions in the countryside, nay even in the cities, who know their interest but cannot articulate it and who are not organised enough to resist the concerted onslaught.*

Even the small groups, which have been able to come together for prohibition, have been groping in the dark. The Tek Chand Committee, as late as in 1964, did not fully appreciate the nature of the organised force of mass media controlled by the

vested group and made a plea for social workers approaching individuals and weaning them away from alcohol. This is like fighting a modern atomic war with stones and arrows. *The organised vested groups have to be met on their own ground; the organised will of the community for its full expression has to make use of the same weapons as their opponents.* In this battle, the will of the people has to be effectively articulated. Failing this, it must necessarily give way to the slow expansion and imperceptible penetration of the pseudo-modernism to which every individual is being subjected every moment through press, literature and the all-pervasive demonstration effects.

Remedial Steps

The above analysis brings out in bold relief the essential nature of drinking and prohibition policy. The present moment appears to be a crucial one for the prohibition movement as it is facing a multi-pronged attack from different quarters; there is also some amount of diffidence in certain quarters. A glance at the history of civilisation and of ideas, however, should discount such a feeling. Some of the civilisations have responded most vigorously to gravest challenges and come out successfully attaining yet greater heights. A nation, a group or an individual is at the zenith of his excellence in most dangerous situations. The history of human ideas is also a witness to this process.

It appears that Prohibition Movement has so far not experienced strong enough challenge as it has been working under the apparently favourable circumstances of its association with the Father of the Nation; the declared policy of the State also generally supported it. The time has now changed. There is a challenge in the air and, therefore, *the present moment appears to be the right time when the latent force of the community can be harnessed effectively to further this cause.* A word of caution may, however, be added here. The process of challenge and response is not an inexorable law of nature. A challenge, if not effectively met, may overwhelm the situation. A number of civilisations were wiped out for this reason.

In the history of every movement, a crucial time comes when a delicate balance is reached. At this point its course can

be determined by a dedicated group. But if the opportunity is lost, it may be a permanent loss. There is, therefore, a challenge as well as a warning. Those of us who believe in prohibition, must act and act promptly and effectively.

The following are some of the urgent steps which are necessary in the light of analysis which has preceded in this paper:

1. The vast good-will in the country for prohibition has to be urgently brought into focus, articulated and shaken from its passive posture. It must assume a positive, nay, 'militant' role, such as to adequately reflect the strength of feeling of the the common people on this issue.
2. Similarly, the laws relating to prohibition should no longer be confined to mere regulatory provisions of crime prevention variety. They should emphasise positive action and active propagation. Voluntary organisations, duly supported by State, should become active catalytic agents at all levels in the national life.
3. The State must throw aside the present defeatist or defensive attitude in matters relating to prohibition. In the light of above analysis, *it must declare in clear terms its policy of 'intervention' in this sphere of personal life of the few in the interest of higher national good.*
4. We should repose full faith in grass root democracy in real terms and build strong and responsible local communities. Prohibition is one area which is the intimate and immediate concern of the entire community, rich and poor, men, women and children. Irresponsible behaviour of one individual can spoil the social climate of the whole village. The opening of a liquor shop makes an important difference to all inhabitants of the neighbourhood. *Therefore, on principles of equity and fair play, it is necessary that, even though prohibition as such may remain a State subject, the decision of allowing a liquor shop in a locality must not be left to the discretion of the official machinery.* There should be a provision for approval of the residents of a locality before a new liquor shop is opened or an old liquor shop is allowed to continue in the neighbourhood. As this is a very important local

matter in which every individual is vitally interested, its decision should not be left even to their elected representatives. The approval must be through a referendum conducted on the principle of secret ballot, it being made obligatory for all residents living in the locality to vote. If the community voluntarily decides to have a shop there could be no objection but if by a majority vote it disfavours a shop, the government must be duty-bound not to force an evil on an unorganised society through its omnipotent bureaucratic machinery. This provision will go a long way in making the local communities responsible and responsive to the new challenge which is thrown to them by the organised vested groups.

5. The analysis in this paper poses a number of questions, particularly in the area of social and economic consequences of drinking in a developing society, whose answers are not known. It is necessary that various relationships which have been put forward as hypotheses are urgently verified and quantified. So much of money is being invested in research by a large number of organisations, including universities, on a variety of problems of social and economic change. But this important aspect has been completely neglected, again presumably as a result of the apathy of the elite even in the temples of learning. *There is urgent need for documentation which can place before the people the raw facts of life so that they can judge for themselves the real nature of the situation and are saved from pronouncements of partisan oracles under the guise of scientific truth.* A crash programme of social research on selected topics should be taken up with the help of institutional finance, of the University Grants Commission and the various universities. The Prohibition Council should be the guiding spirit behind this programme.
6. The mass communication media must be pressed into service for countering the forces against prohibition. There should be a well planned programme of short films, news items and broadcasts, discussions through

all possible media available in the country. The Prohibition Council should co-ordinate this programme. The Council itself must be strengthened and manned by competent young enthusiastic people committed to the cause of prohibition. The financial resources of the Council should be considerably augmented so that it is able to make a decisive impact. If the Centre is willing to subsidise State Governments to the extent of crores of rupees if they go in for prohibition, the first-year programme of the Council should be of the order of Rs. 1 crore which may be progressively increased as the tempo of its programme increases.

7. One thing is clear. The prohibition pressure group has necessarily, in the first instance, to clearly identify its enemies, the points of weakness, in the socio-economic fabric of the community which are vulnerable to pseudo-modern influences. It should, then, concentrate its efforts on these points to achieve optimum results. The following are three specific points which need immediate attention:

- (i). Trade Union Leadership in relation to urban working population;
- (ii). Student population in general; and
- (iii). The Government servants.

(i) Trade Union Leadership

Voluntary workers in the industrial labour force may not be very effective so long as the trade union leadership is not brought round to subscribe to prohibition ideology. The trade union leaders comprise that group to which an average worker looks for a lead in any issue where he comes in conflict with the management. This is an important area of his activity and, therefore, the Trade Union Group assumes leadership in other spheres as well. It is fully realised that there is multiple leadership in any social group. But in the context of low social cohesion and heterogeneity of the urban lower group, the trade union leadership itself may become the reference group in matters other than purely employer-employee relationship, particularly the outward

behaviour pattern. The T.U. leadership group itself may tend to imbibe the valuation norms of pseudo-modernity in the absence of a compulsive force from below which by definition is lacking in our situation. Therefore, the prohibition pressure group should entrench itself in the Trade Union Leadership to be effective in the industrial population of the fast growing urban centres.

(ii) Student Population

The student community is the most vulnerable group which cuts across all the four sectors in the model developed by us earlier. In this group, all sections of the community meet, more or less, on equal terms. But the impact of the group on its constituent elements is varied. We have noted that the elite, even the intellectual elite, does not hold in high esteem, nay, it may even deprecate, all that is traditional. A student coming from any of the three sectors other than the elite experiences a psychological crisis. He lives in a sort of joint family but the same joint family is pictured to him as a drag on economic growth. He comes from a traditional background where religion, social customs etc., still have a hold and the very same system is outright condemned in the text books, lectures, newspapers etc. The villagers, the poor are depicted as ignorant mass, not prepared to put in hard work and, therefore, needing a complete reorientation of outlook, attitudes etc. In this 'intellectual climate' the boy gets alienated from his village, from his family and even from his parents. He not only loses respect for them but also does not have the benefit of 'socialising' influence of the group. On the other hand, he sees from a distance the glamour of the elite, the behaviour pattern of their young torn from its context; he yearns to be somewhat like those who come from those classes.

The student, therefore, finds himself completely frameless, rudderless, torn between the two worlds. His condition is worse than of those in the urban lower classes. As a youngman grows, shoulders family responsibilities and faces the realities of life within his own group, he no doubt experiences a fall from the make-believe world but acquires a sense of realism on the basis of his experience and finds a more or less stable position in the group, acquires his own frame of reference as also a reference group. But the youth is in an extremely helpless situation. Con-

sequently it is this group which is most vulnerable to the attack of pseudo-modernity. This process is already quite pronounced in cosmopolitan towns where demonstration effects are too strong and phenomenon of social dualism very marked. It is, therefore, necessary for any movement to give the first and foremost attention to this group, take them in confidence and place before them the hard facts of life.

To the positive side of this group, it must be stated that it is this which can be imbued with a sense of idealism, which can be moved to action by the real life of poverty and hunger and the devastation which is wrought by the evil of drinking. Unfortunately, as already stated, this group, as indeed a vast majority of us, is completely in the dark about these realities of life. The mere realisation of the reality will wean away a large section of this group from the path of pseudo-modernity and commit them for a dedicated life long service of the poor and the destitute. We should, therefore, concentrate our attention on the student community, educate them about the realities, make them realise that drinking is a despicable vice and no valuation is attached to it. Nothing will then be impossible for the young rising generation.

Government Servants

The Government Servants' Conduct Rules should be amended so as to make drinking undesirable. There should, however, be exception in favour of those who declare themselves 'addicts' and they should be given liberal permits to counter any plea for pressurisation. An atmosphere should be created even in the Government service where stigma should get attached to drinking. It is no use frowning upon those who are addicts. Moral pressure should be put on those who are not addicts to refrain from drinking. Suitable entries should be made in the personal records of individual officers. Notable work in the service of prohibition should be liberally rewarded. It should be considered social service of a very high order even by public servants and they should be publicly honoured by Presidential awards for conspicuous work. These steps will help in creating a positive climate for prohibition.

Tables and Figures

TABLE I

Income-wise Distribution of Monthly Expenditure of Drinker's Families by Items of Expenditure in some Maharashtra Towns

(A)	(B)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
upto Rs. 25	3	20.01 (60.31)	0.92 (8.81)	0.58 (1.75)	0.58 (1.75)	2.17 (6.54)	0.03 (0.09)	0.16 (0.48)	--	0.06 (0.18)	2.00 (6.03)	3.17 (5.56)	0.91 (2.75)	0.58 (1.75)	---	---	33.16 (100.00)
Rs. 25.01	118	35.32 (56.61)	5.02 (8.05)	1.75 (2.81)	1.66 (2.66)	0.82 (1.31)	0.51 (0.82)	0.78 (1.25)	1.40 (2.24)	0.84 (0.84)	2.14 (3.43)	4.08 (6.54)	3.69 (5.92)	3.40 (5.45)	0.74 (1.19)	0.23 (0.37)	62.39 (100.00)
Rs. 75.01	123	51.84 (52.04)	8.52 (8.55)	2.92 (2.93)	2.86 (2.87)	1.59 (1.60)	1.30 (1.31)	1.55 (1.56)	1.97 (1.98)	1.59 (1.60)	4.02 (4.04)	5.59 (5.61)	7.51 (7.54)	5.43 (5.45)	2.06 (2.07)	0.84 (0.85)	99.62 (100.00)
Rs. 125.01	55	72.56 (44.29)	13.75 (8.39)	3.84 (2.35)	4.90 (2.99)	2.84 (1.73)	2.34 (1.48)	2.75 (1.68)	3.38 (2.06)	3.70 (2.26)	9.25 (5.65)	10.14 (6.19)	15.01 (9.16)	8.17 (4.99)	6.97 (4.26)	4.12 (2.52)	163.83 (100.00)
Rs. 225.01	12	117.89 (43.77)	22.71 (8.43)	5.48 (2.03)	8.40 (3.12)	5.92 (2.20)	3.58 (1.33)	5.01 (1.86)	6.38 (2.37)	3.63 (1.35)	14.93 (5.54)	14.16 (5.26)	9.96 (3.70)	14.60 (5.42)	18.50 (6.87)	18.18 (6.75)	269.35 (100.00)
Rs. 350.01 and above	3	173.33 (30.24)	91.67 (15.99)	39.44 (6.88)	23.23 (4.07)	23.61 (4.12)	13.97 (2.44)	6.67 (1.16)	1.45 (3.39)	16.78 (2.93)	0.67 (0.12)	11.67 (2.03)	24.65 (4.30)	14.33 (2.50)	86.67 (15.12)	27.00 (4.71)	573.24 (100.00)
Total	314	52.64 (49.11)	9.40 (8.77)	3.07 (2.86)	3.16 (2.95)	1.90 (1.77)	1.40 (1.31)	1.64 (1.53)	2.32 (2.16)	1.89 (1.76)	4.61 (4.30)	6.19 (5.78)	7.60 (7.09)	5.54 (5.17)	3.76 (3.51)	2.07 (1.93)	107.18 (100.00)

Key to Column numbers in Tables I and II

A Income B No. of Families	1. Food	2. Clothing	3. Housing	4. Personal Care	5. Medical Care	6. Education and Reading	7. Amusement and
Recreation 8. Travelling	9. Conventionalities and Charities	10. Interest and Debt Redemption	11. Tea and Coffee	12. Toddy and Liquor	13. Tobacco, Panapan		
and other stimulants	14. Savings	15. Others	16. Total Expenditure				

TABLE II

Income-wise Distribution of Monthly Expenditure of Drinker's Families by Items of Expenditure in some Maharashtra Towns

(A)	(B)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
up to Rs. 25	38	14.08 (64.26)	2.06 (9.40)	1.47 (6.71)	0.41 (1.87)	0.14 (0.68)	0.18 (0.82)	0.03 (0.13)	0.36 (1.64)	0.36 (1.34)	--	1.50 (6.93)	--	0.02 (0.09)	---	0.2 (0.09)	21.91 (100.00)
Rs. 25.01	402	33.42 (57.11)	5.83 (9.96)	2.45 (4.19)	1.97 (3.86)	0.89 (1.52)	0.73 (1.25)	0.67 (1.14)	1.11 (1.89)	0.93 (1.59)	1.50 (2.56)	4.05 (6.92)	--	3.03 (5.18)	0.87 (1.49)	1.08 (1.84)	58.52 (100.00)
Rs. 75.01	284	53.52 (52.92)	9.71 (9.60)	6.04 (5.97)	3.48 (3.44)	2.71 (2.71)	2.07 (2.05)	1.43 (1.41)	2.17 (2.15)	1.83 (1.81)	3.10 (3.07)	6.66 (6.58)	--	4.44 (4.39)	2.10 (2.08)	1.87 (1.85)	101.14 (100.00)
Rs. 125.01	207	77.64 (46.60)	16.94 (10.17)	11.99 (7.20)	6.01 (3.61)	5.09 (3.06)	6.50 (3.90)	2.22 (1.33)	4.56 (2.74)	2.93 (1.76)	4.33 (2.60)	10.63 (6.38)	--	4.89 (2.93)	7.11 (4.27)	5.75 (3.45)	166.60 (100.00)
Rs. 225.01	62	123.31 (44.22)	28.87 (10.5)	17.74 (6.36)	9.83 (3.53)	7.29 (2.61)	14.96 (5.37)	3.49 (1.25)	9.71 (3.59)	5.59 (2.01)	10.30 (3.69)	16.56 (5.94)	--	7.55 (2.71)	15.73 (5.64)	7.92 (2.84)	278.83 (100.00)
Rs. 350.01 and above	43	194.48 (32.62)	50.22 (8.42)	33.94 (5.69)	17.77 (2.98)	26.31 (4.41)	47.06 (7.89)	7.41 (1.24)	23.93 (4.02)	19.44 (3.26)	16.11 (2.70)	27.25 (4.57)	--	14.17 (2.38)	88.37 (14.82)	29.81 (5.00)	596.25 (100.00)
Total	1036	59.12 (46.94)	12.20 (9.69)	7.52 (5.97)	4.26 (3.38)	3.64 (2.89)	5.01 (3.98)	1.61 (1.28)	3.52 (2.80)	2.59 (2.06)	3.58 (2.84)	7.70 (6.11)	--	4.46 (3.54)	6.94 (5.51)	3.79 (3.01)	125.95 (100.00)

TABLE III

Expenditure on drinks etc., and education (figure in brackets) per family as percentage of Income

	Sholapur	Surat	Hubli
0-45	46.2 (-)	17.5 (-)	29.6 (-)
45-90	16.1 (1.9)	19.3 (0.7)	21.2 (3.2)
90-135	15.6 (.8)	19.5 (1.3)	17.2 (1.1)
135-180	13.0 (1.0)	19.9 (1.0)	17.5 (2.4)
180-225	13.0 (1.8)	20.0 (.7)	20.5 (3.8)
225-270	15.3 (.7)	19.5 (1.3)	19.4 (0.1)
270-315	14.8 (1.8)	13.7 (.8)	13.7 (.1)
315-360	16.2 (2.4)	23.4 (.5)	29.8 (.1)
360-405	18.6 (1.8)	9.3 (.5)	---
405-450	19.4 (1.6)	---	---
450-	11.9 (.8)	21.3 (1.5)	---
	-----	-----	-----
	14.9 (1.7)	19.5 (1.1)	18.8 (2.1)

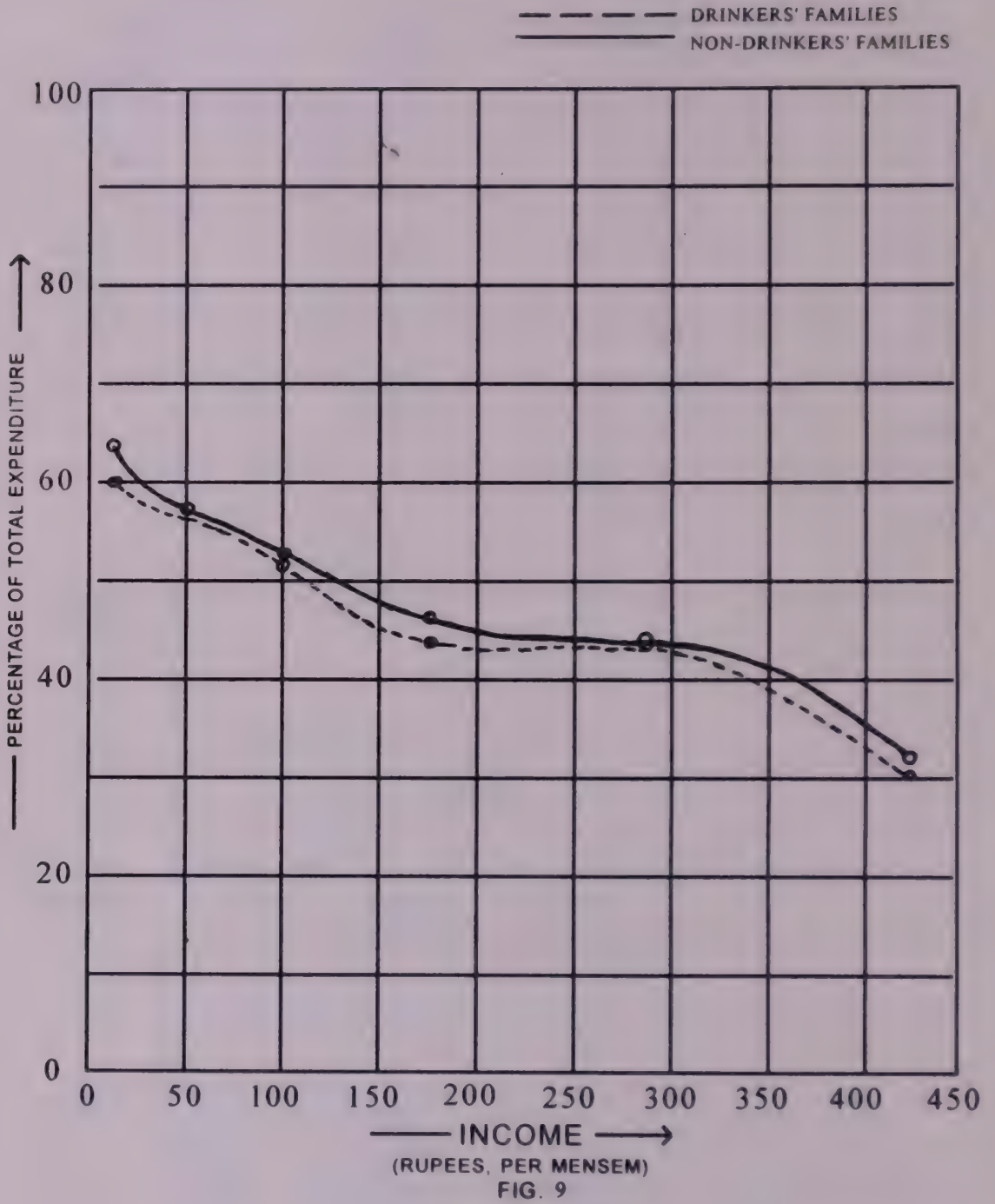
TABLE IV*

Table showing income spent on liquor according to occupation group

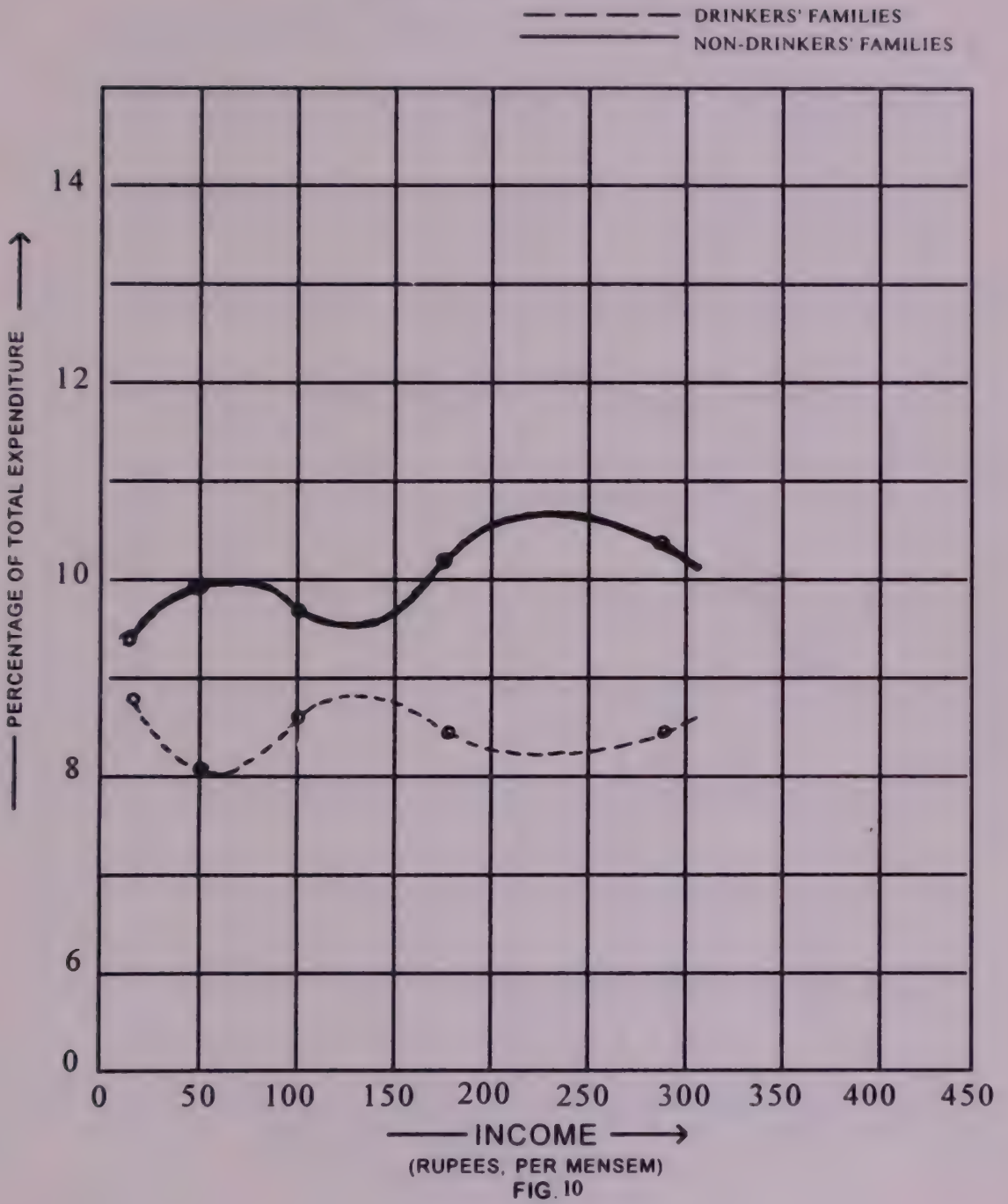
Occupation	Average monthly income per family	Average monthly expenditure	Expenditure on liquor	(4) as per centage of (3)
1	2	3	4	5
1. Business trade	325/4	300 /-	50 /-	16.6
2. Service	275 /-	240 /-	25 /-	10.4
3. Mill Workers	140/8/-	150 /-	18/6	11.8
4. Cottage Workers	125 /-	119/5/-	15/12	13.2
5. Transport Workers	135 /-	130 /-	16/8	12.7
6. Menial servants	85 /-	85 /-	10 /-	12.7
7. Professionals	375 /-	350 /-	70 /-	20.0

* K. C. Sehgal's Study of 100 Families in Delhi

ITEM NO. 1 (FOOD)



ITEM NO. 2 (CLOTHING)



ITEM NO. 3 (HOUSING)

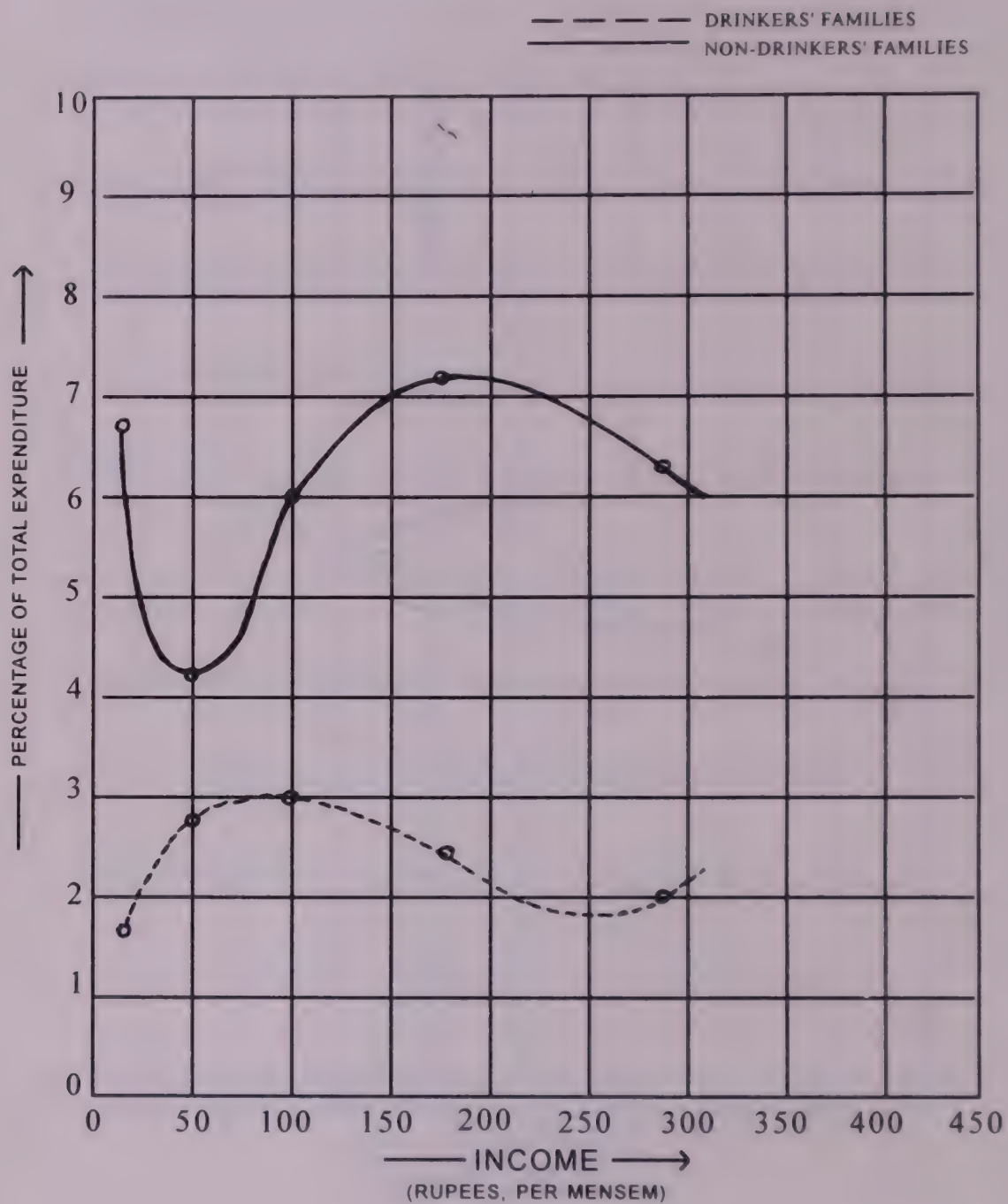
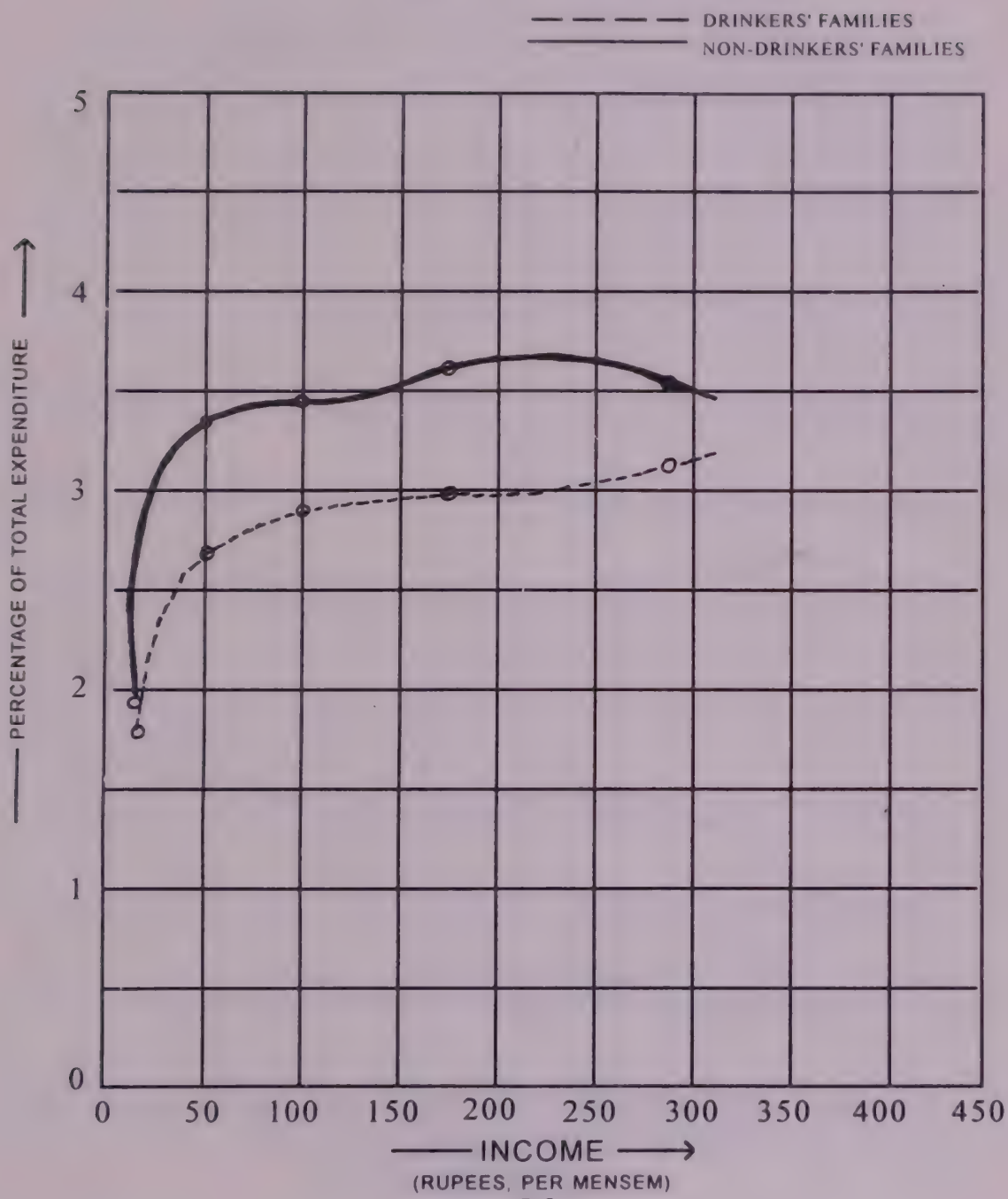
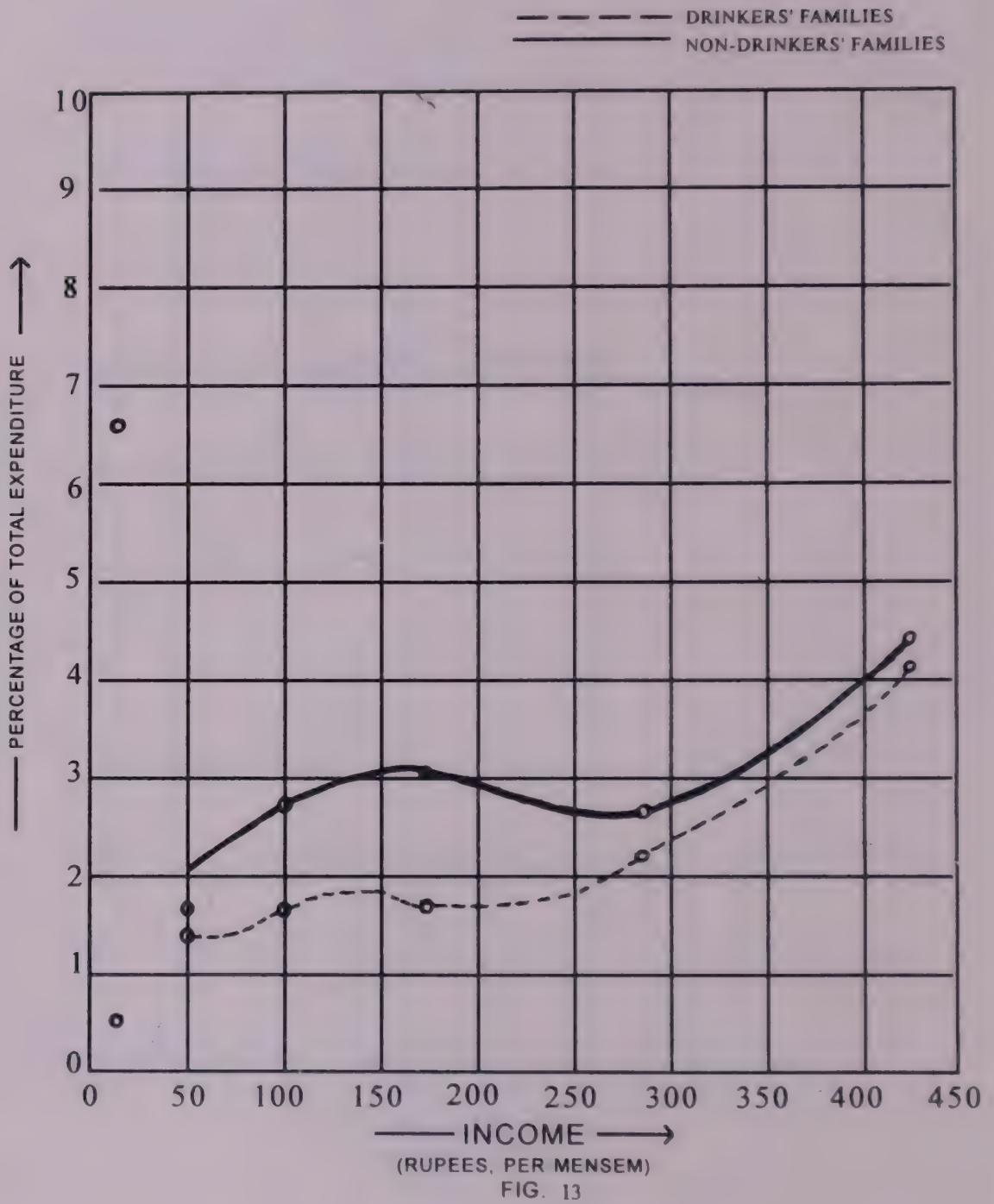


FIG. 11

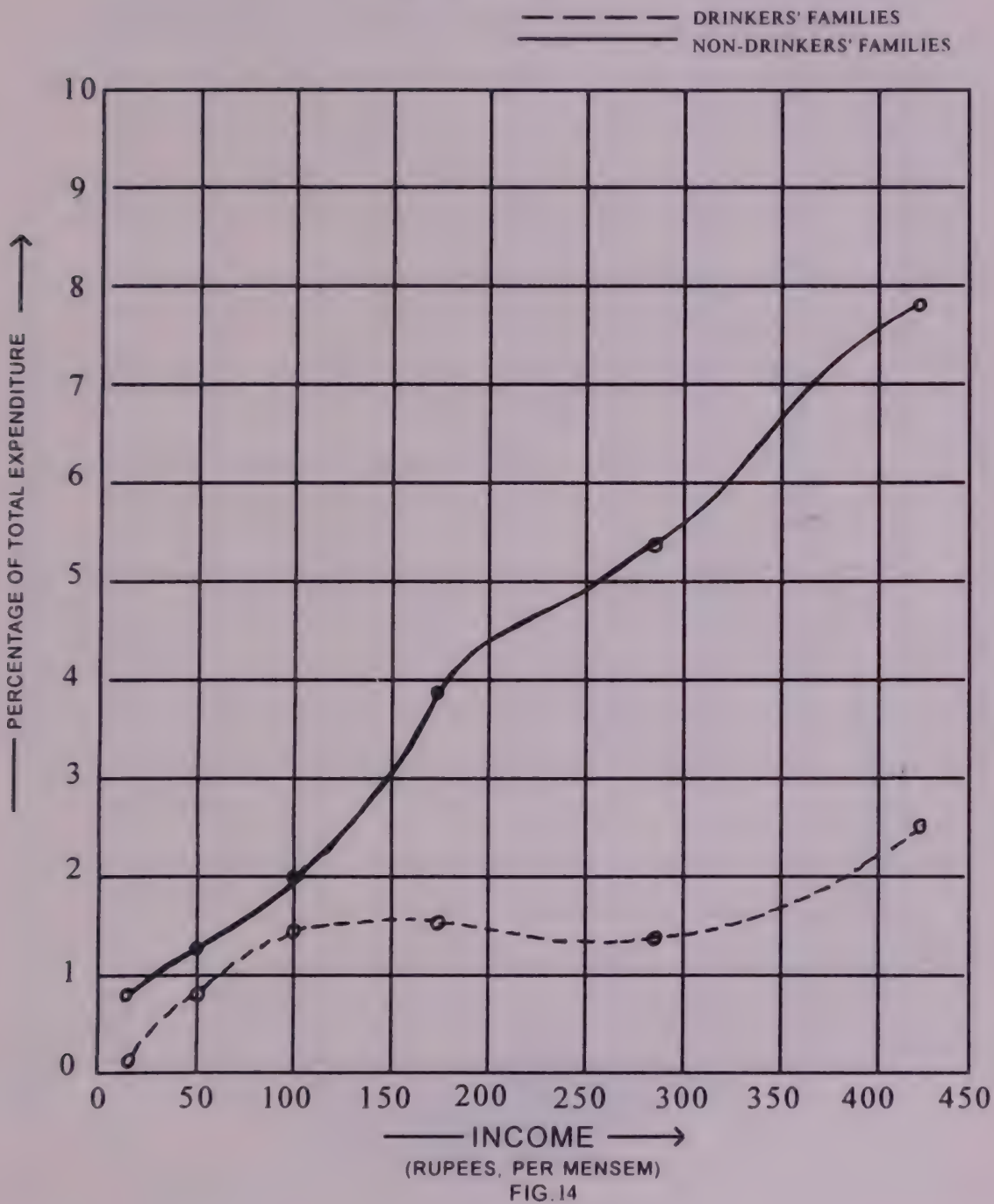
ITEM NO. 4 (PERSONAL CARE)



ITEM NO. 5 (MEDICAL CARE)



ITEM NO. 6 (EDUCATION & READING)



ITEM NO. 7 (AMUSEMENT & RECREATION)

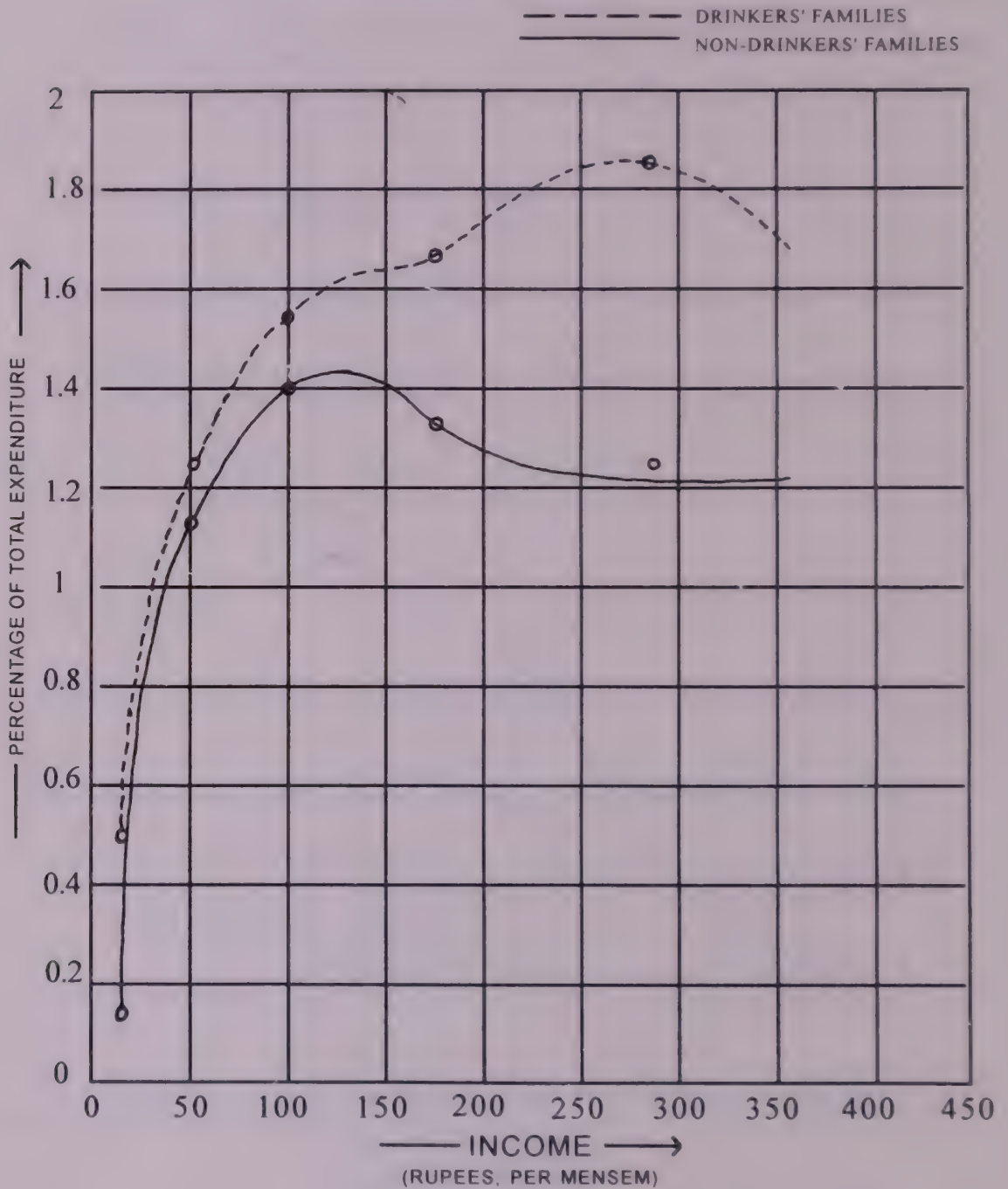


FIG. 15

ITEM NO. 8 (TRAVELLING)

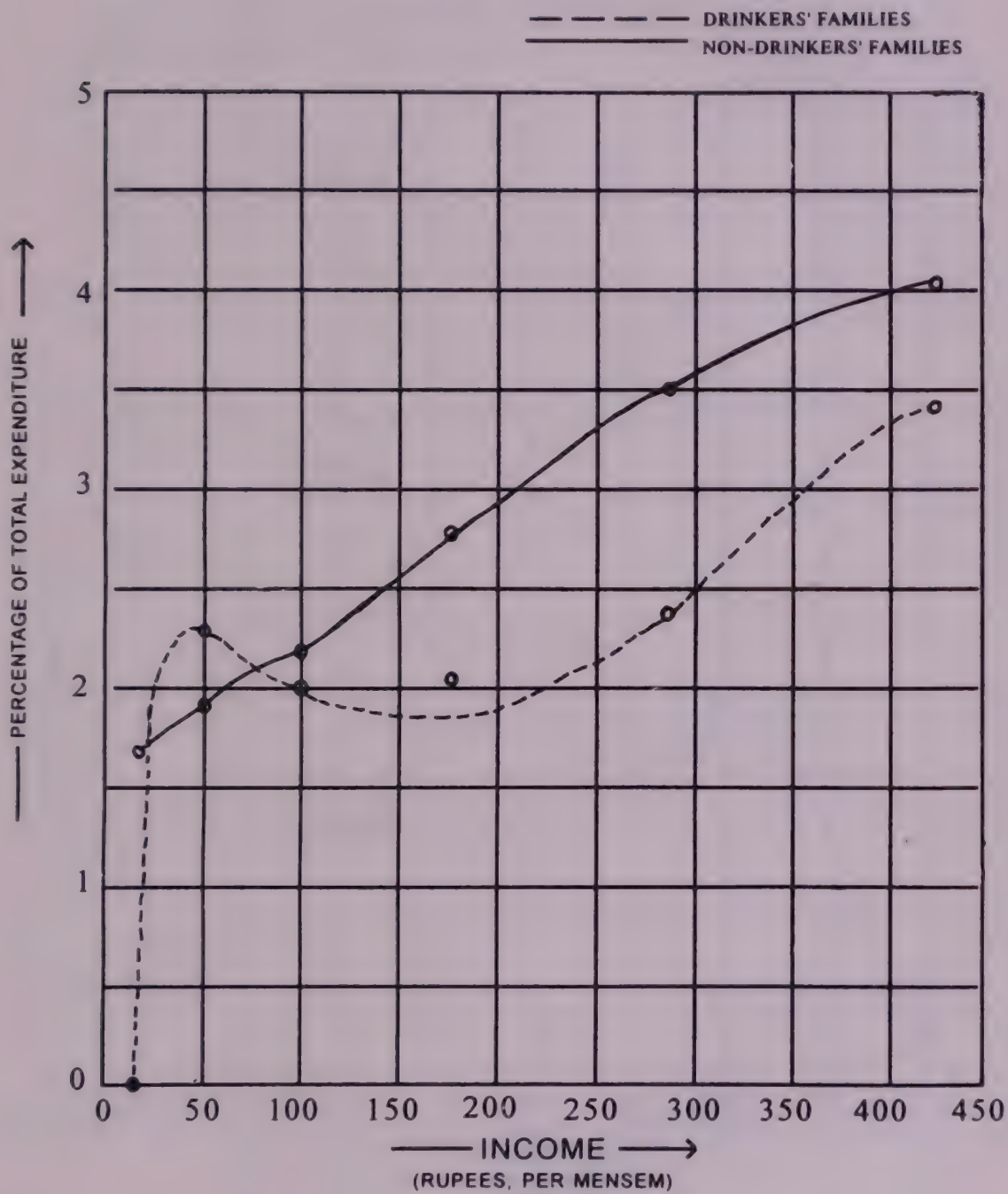
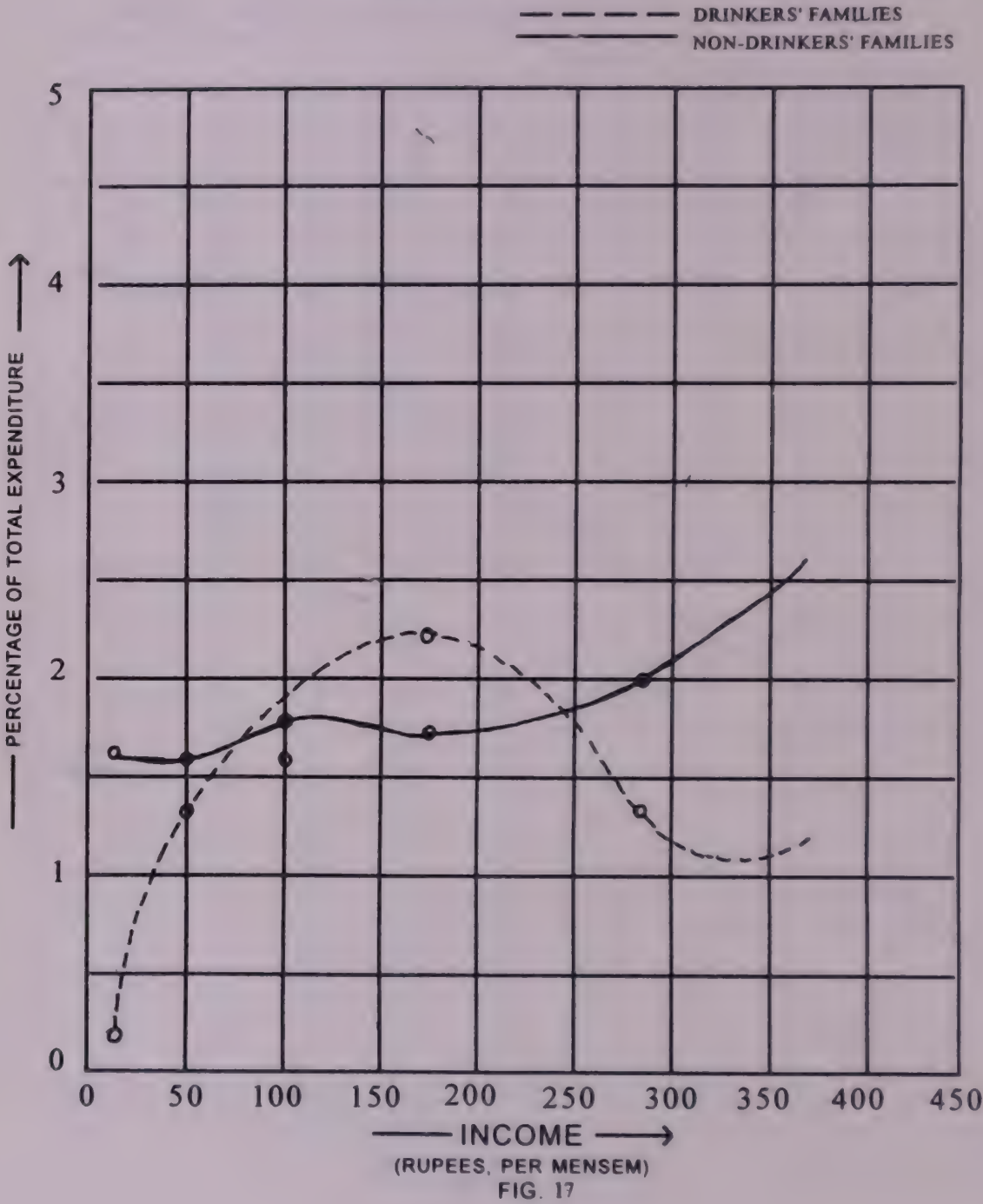
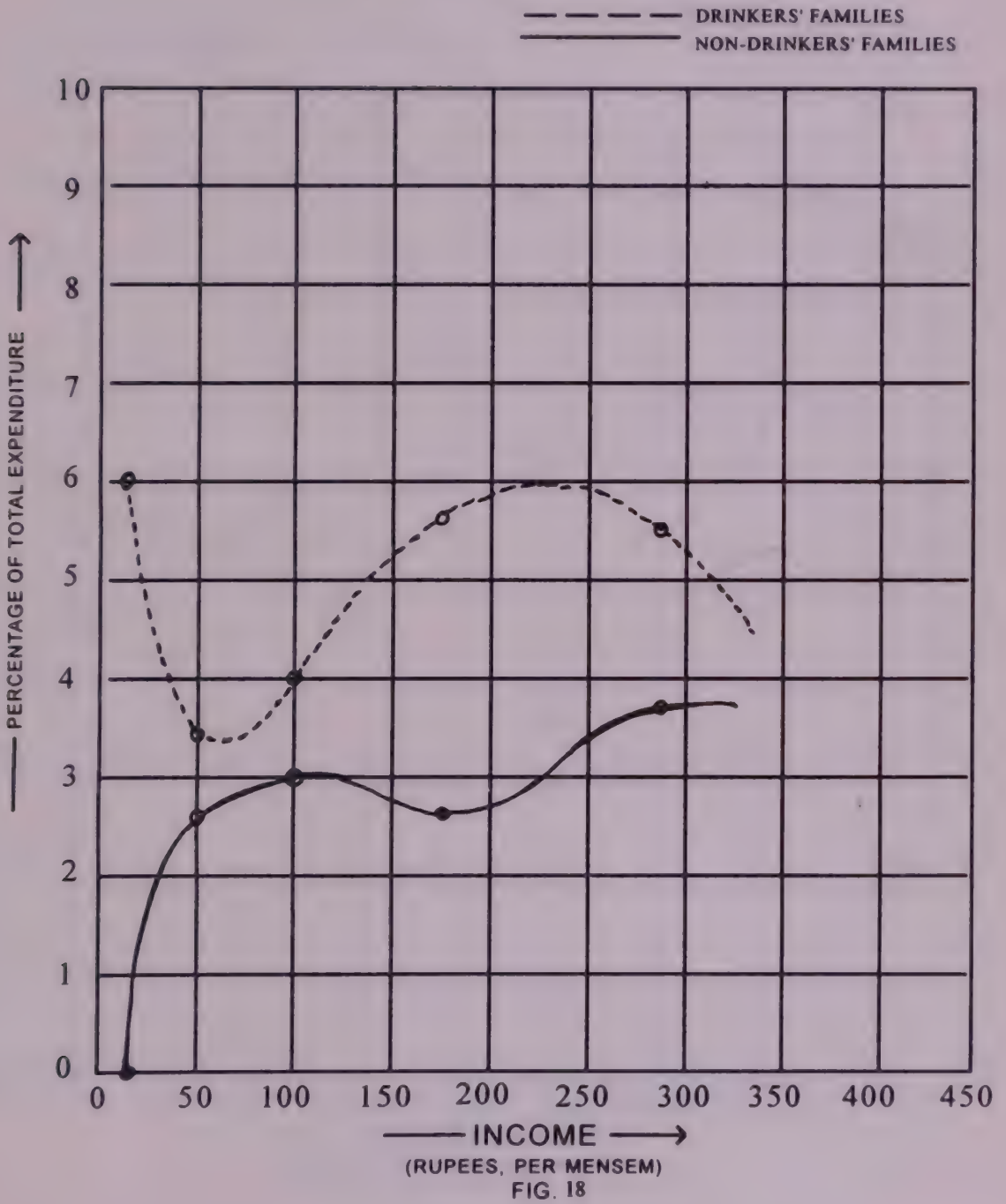


FIG. 16

ITEM NO. 9 (CONVENTIONALITIES AND CHARITIES)



ITEM NO. 10 (INTEREST & DEBT REDEMPTION)



ITEM NO. 11 (TEA & COFFEE)

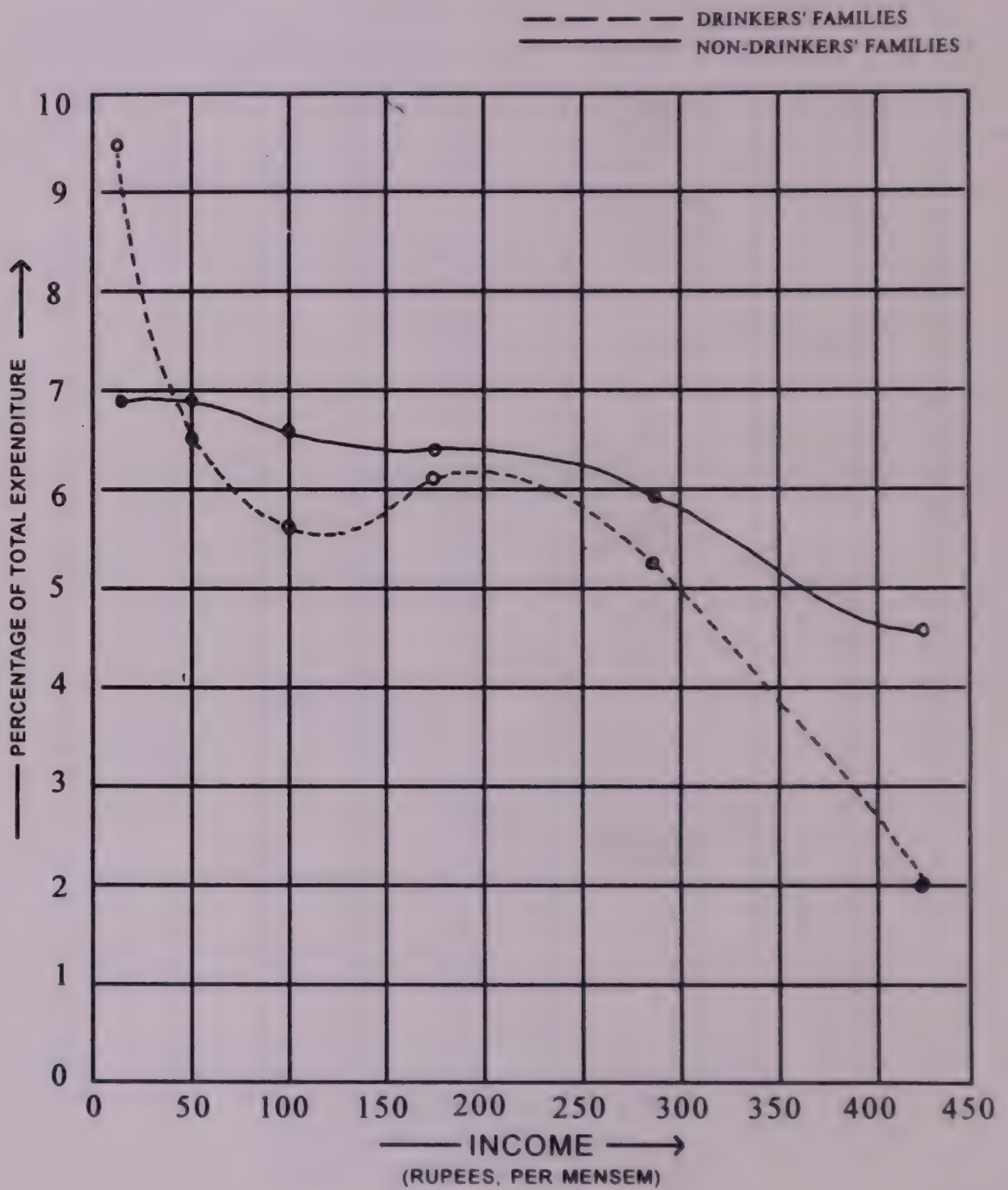
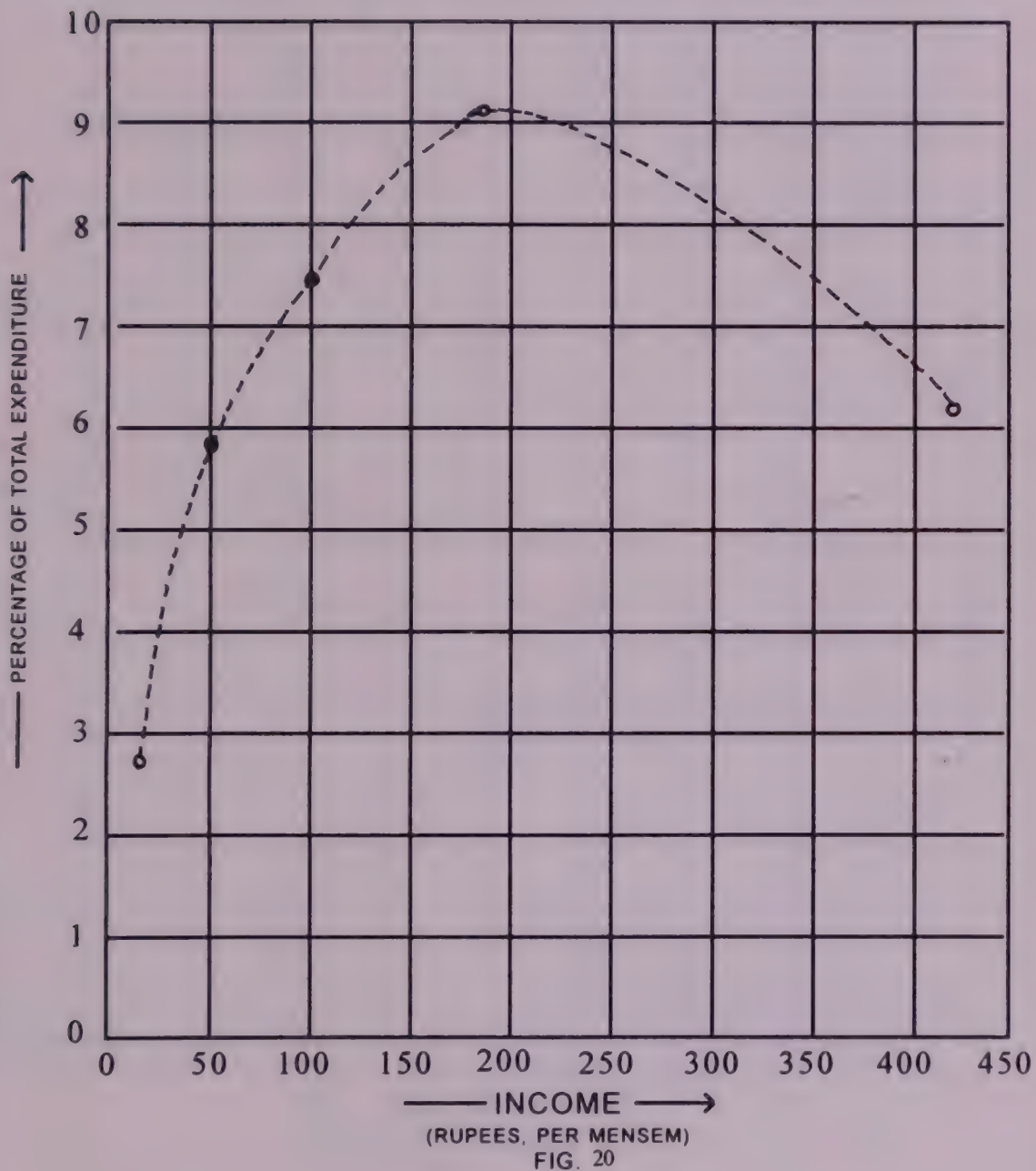


FIG. 19

ITEM NO. 12 (TODDY & LIQOUR)

— — — — — DRINKERS' FAMILIES



ITEM NO. 13 (TOBACCO, PAN SUPARI & OTHER STIMULANTS)

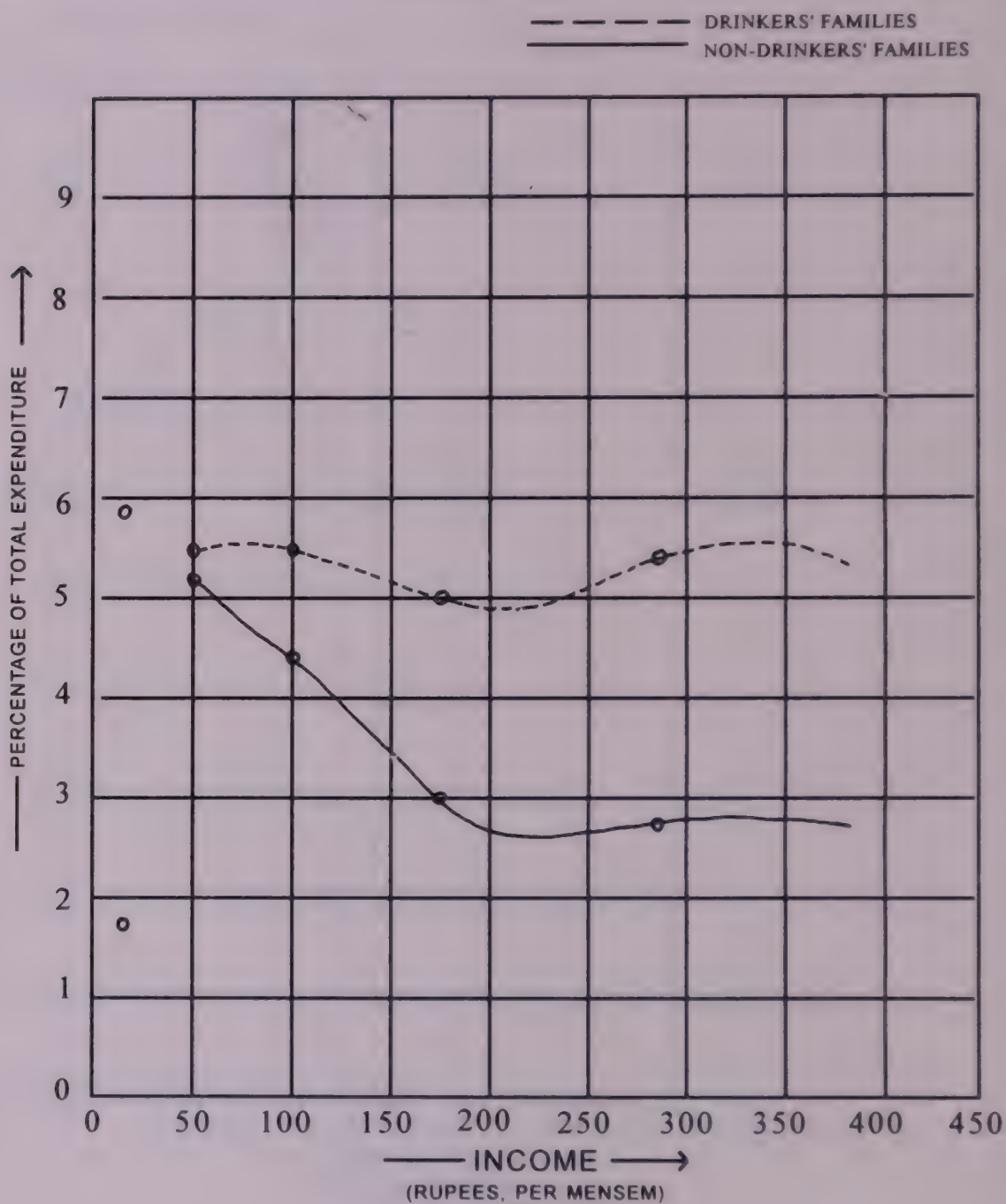


FIG. 21

ITEM NO. 14 (SAVINGS)

----- DRINKERS' FAMILIES
 _____ NON-DRINKERS' FAMILIES

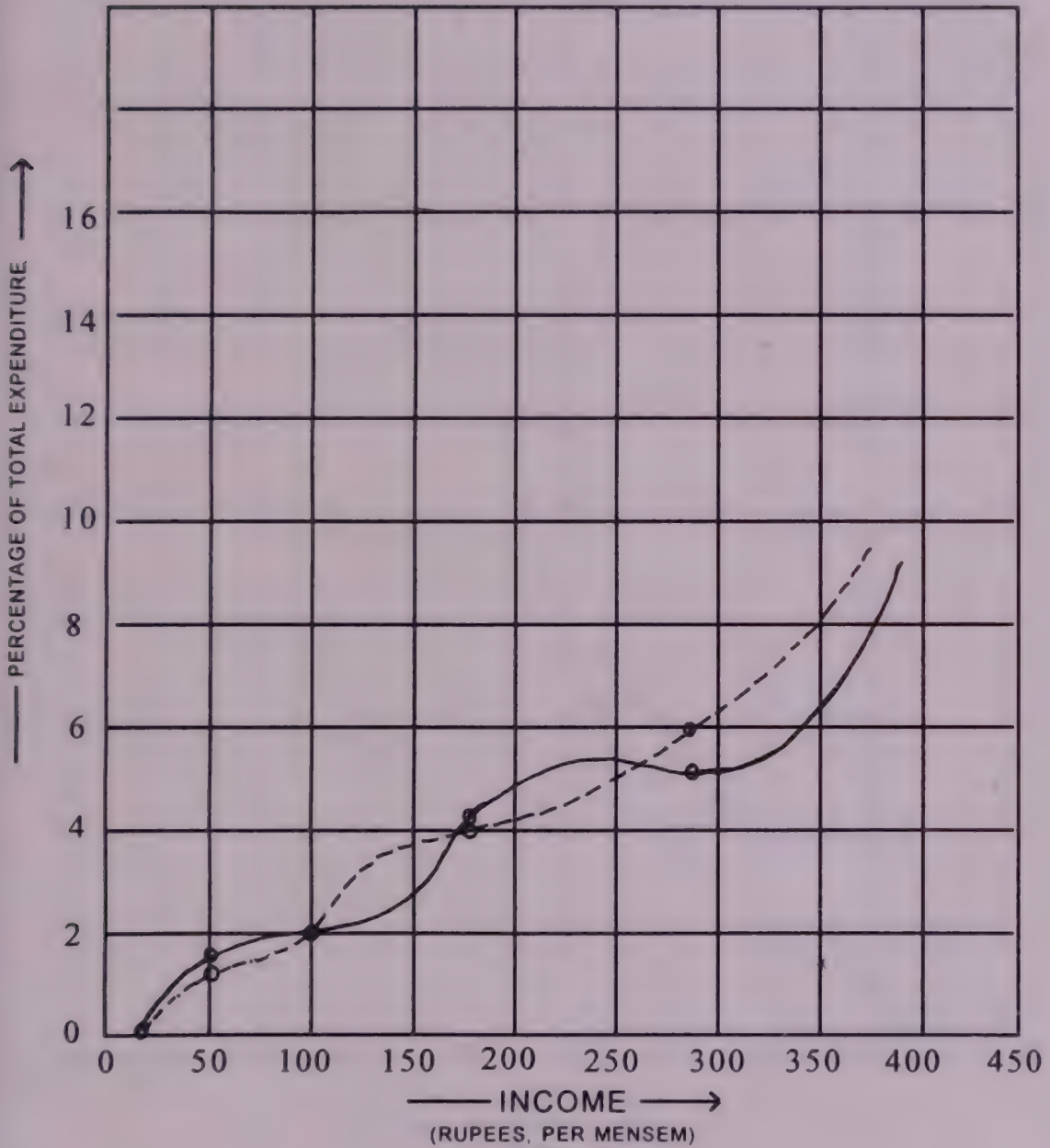


FIG. 22

ITEM NO. 15 (OTHERS)

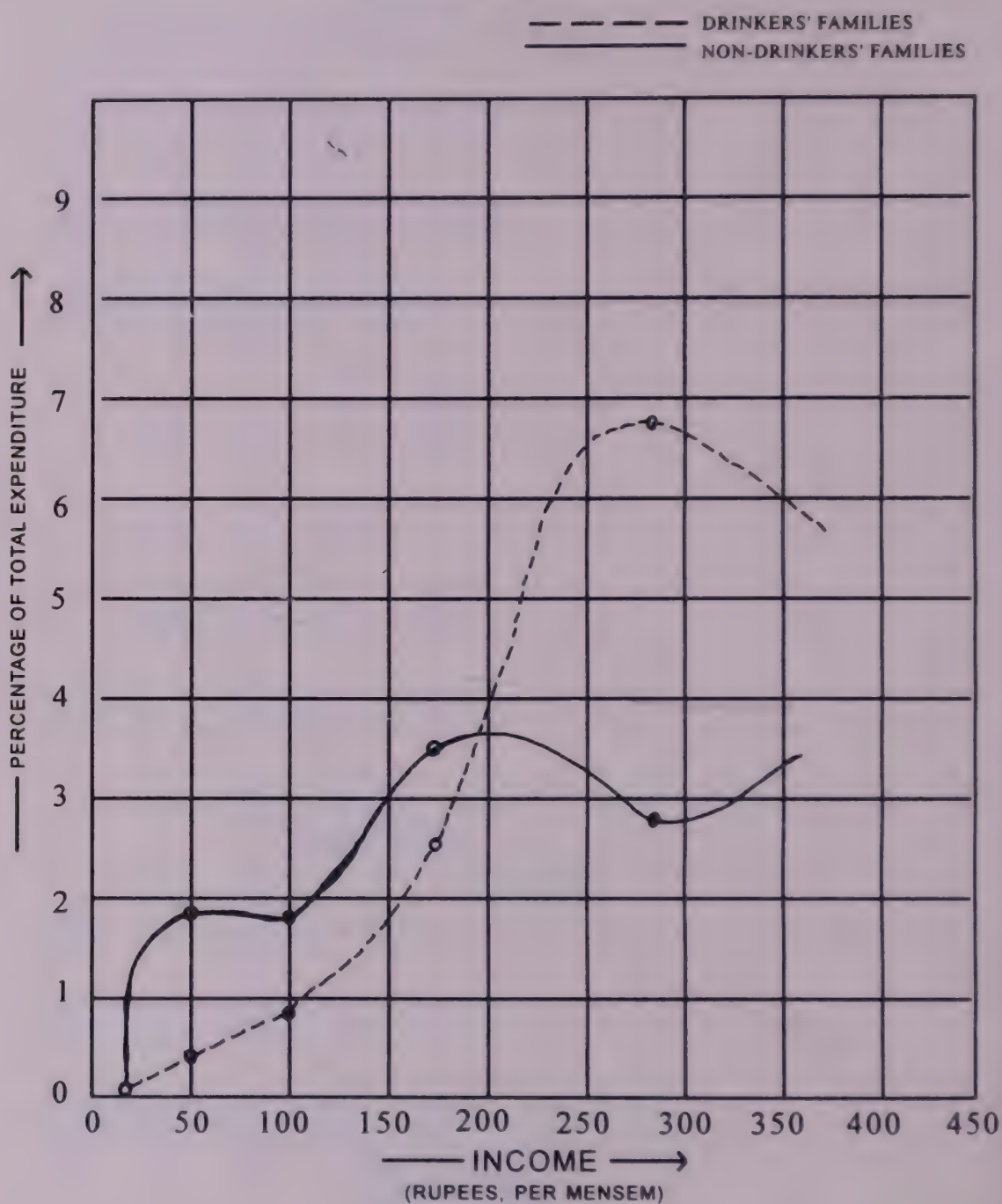


FIG. 23



Dr. Brahmdev Sharma (b.1931) studied at Gwalior and Banaras. He was awarded Ph.D. (Mathematics) while teaching at Pilani, Rajasthan. He joined IAS in 1956.

In his career as an administrator, the first role-conflict he faced was as Collector Bastar (1968-71), *as representative of the state* responsible for protecting tribal people *versus as agent of government* keen on so-called development at any cost. It culminated in open confrontation attracting wide attention. A special assignment on tribal development in GOI (1972-78) followed. The 'sub-plan' strategy prepared during this period is still continuing. His efforts to implement that policy in its true spirit as Secretary, Tribal Welfare M.P. (1978-80) created another conflict situation. Consequently he moved to Shillong, a different tribal setting, as Planning Advisor to the North-Eastern Council. Realising inherent limitations of higher civil servants in key secretarial positions *vis-a-vis* political executive he sought premature retirement in 1981.

The turmoil in NEHU obliged him to become its V.C. (1981-86). He was Commissioner for SC/ST, a Constitutional authority, during 1986-92. His Reports to the President as Commissioner, replete with cases of violation of Constitution by governments and other authorities, has been hailed as a work 'next in order of historic significance only to the Constitution of India'.

With faith in people's power that alone can counter iniquitous system and effect structural transformation, he moved to a small village in Bastar. He founded *Nate-na-Raj Andolan* with the declaration that the community at the village level is *swayambhu* and self-governance is its natural right. The success in getting a special provision incorporated in the Constitution which provides space for the village-community in the form of Gram Sabha within its formal structure and acknowledges its competence for managing all its affairs marks the beginning of a radical transformation of centralised polity into participative democracy. The message of the new provision is spreading to other areas. He is Chairman of *Bharat Jan Andolan* (People's Movement of India) with constituents all over the country.

He has written extensively on mathematics, education, tribal affairs and political economy in Hindi and English. Currently he is addressing the people in their idiom on basic contradictions and possible strategies and struggles to meet the challenge. *Hamara Kanoon* (Our Law) and his commentaries there on have reached the remotest tribal village.

